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Rev. Thomas Joseph Gaster
An Urban Missionary in Historical and Theological Context

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Rev. Thomas Joseph Gaster:

An Urban Missionary in Historical and Theological Context

Rev. Francis Orr-Ewing

PhD

Rev. Thomas Joseph Gaster: Urban Missionary in Historical and Theological Context

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Introduction

Mission and the New Parochialism in the Age of Empire:

Thomas Gaster and All Saints Peckham

The history of the evangelical revival is in a considerable measure a history of personalities. It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that spiritual leadership and devotion are not essentially associated with special prominence in the visible church. As with other schools of thought, many of the greatest names in the evangelical movement... are of men who lived out all their days as plain parish clergymen.¹

So begins the biography of Canon Alfred Christopher of St Aldate's Church, Oxford and Thomas Gaster is in many ways one of those 'who lived out their days as plain parish clergymen'. But to the missionary Evangelicals of the late nineteenth century, a plain parish clergyman was to describe the highest motivation of local clergy engaged in mission. Christopher was one of a greater number of missionary minded evangelical clergy within the Church of England, who developed a new and distinctive approach to the parish which was played out in numerous local contexts throughout the country. This distinctive approach blended the leadership skills of the foreign mission field with the pastoral demands of the English parish and formed a new paradigm which may be termed the new parochialism. After 1851 parochialism started to demonstrate a fusion of parochial and mission models that was first imagined and then practised.² Thus it may be that away from the glare of heroism and exceptionalism that the historian can best interrogate the past, and this will be done through a careful examination of the ministry of Thomas Gaster, who was a proponent of this new parochialism.

¹ J. S. Reynolds, *Canon Christopher of St Aldate's Oxford* (Abingdon, 1967), p. 2.

² D. B. McIlhiney, *A Gentleman in every Slum: Church of England Missions in East London. 1837-1914*. (Eugene, 1988), dates this new fusion of models from 1851; pp. 16, 17, 96.

Despite sharing the faith and values of those whom history has already rewarded with reputation and through whom many have already drawn their lessons, his theology, life and method have not been closely observed until this study. Few in this century have ever read his missionary journals, few have read his account of the foundation of All Saints Peckham, and none have knitted these two parts of his life and ministry together to generate a fuller and richer story for comparison and research. That said, the notion of ‘plain parish clergymen’ needs some further clarification. The replacement of Hanoverian models of the parish, though owing much to resurgent evangelical theology, cannot adequately explain the startling rebirth of the parish in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Mark Smith suggests that despite the attempts of theologians and historians to analyse Evangelicals in the Church of England all attempts to do so without giving primary weight to the parish will necessarily fall short. And to the Evangelical of the nineteenth-century the parish was missionary in nature, a constant ‘theatre of conversion’.⁴ The concept of parish which drove Evangelical Anglican clergy during the latter half of the nineteenth century owed an enormous amount to spiritual and social entrepreneurialism,⁵ but is best explained as being informed by the methods and motivations of the global missions movement. It is this fusion in the latter half of the nineteenth-century which will be described as the new parochialism.

This historical research has extensive contemporary applications, and furnishes answers to questions raised in present mission studies, especially within an Anglican ecclesiology and tradition. The history of Evangelical Anglicans, especially of the nineteenth century, with their focus on mission both at home and abroad can offer us clues, parallels and warnings for today. The nineteenth-century Christian dealt with pressing industrial realities, globalisation, cultural wars, burgeoning developments in

⁴ M. Smith, ‘Evangelical Parish Ministry in the Twentieth Century’ p. 207, in A. Atherstone, J. Maiden (eds) *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century: Reform, Resistance and Renewal* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 206-226.

⁵ Social entrepreneurs are outlined by Schwab Foundation as those who ‘drive social innovation and transformation in various fields including education, health, environment and enterprise development. They pursue poverty alleviation goals with entrepreneurial zeal, business methods and the courage to innovate and overcome traditional practices. A social entrepreneur, similar to a business entrepreneur, builds strong and sustainable organizations, which are either set up as not-for-profits or companies.’ [<http://www.schwabfound.org/content/what-social-entrepreneur>] accessed 18 March 2014. See also I. C. MacMillan and J. Thompson, *The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook: Pressure Test, Plan, Launch and Scale Your Social Enterprise* (Wharton Digital Press, 2013).

modern technologies and progress in communication and travel. While there was a great deal of overseas expansion, as the British Empire embraced the economic mutualism and multi-directional inter-connectivity of globalisation, there was also a coextensive metropolitan infill with a focus of missionary efforts into the new urban realities, neglected populations and areas of deprivation within the United Kingdom.

As will be demonstrated in this study, mission and parish interacted in complex and creative ways. Missionaries often imported ideas of the English parish to the foreign fields, and missions were financially supported by English parishes, sustaining their work, but also bringing global concerns to local congregations. Historians should ask what the congregations and leaders believed they were doing, how they exercised leadership and encouraged spirituality, how their methodologies developed and through which agencies and stories their motivations were sustained. The cultural contexts of North India between 1857-1862 and suburban London between 1863-1909, which were experienced by Thomas Gaster enable this study to respond to the reality of Christian congregational life and mission during a season in which paradigms which operated globally were also applied locally. It merits the researcher to derive from the embedded lives of real figures, insights into the forms of leadership and mission which were so successful and influential. In contemporary studies of Christian congregations, using participant observation and other tools has enabled a sensitivity and detail in social, ethnographic and theological analyses.⁶ Though immersion and observation cannot be research tools in historical instances, nevertheless theologically sensitive historical study can employ a form of empathy which is akin to observational skills and will allow an accurate rendering of the self-understanding of Gaster and his contemporaries. Theological and cultural empathy amongst historians of Evangelicalism has precedent but the effective analysis of the felt realities of evangelical life is best served by some of the research methods of ethnography and the coalescing discipline of congregational studies.⁷

⁶ Woodhead, Guest and Tusting explore varied congregational research tools including participant observation, congregational questionnaires and assessing the culture of congregations' themes and show how the study of congregations has been 'fed by many disciplines including theology, religious studies, sociology, anthropology, organisational studies, linguistics, social theory and gender studies.' M. Guest *et al.*, *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context* (Ashgate, 2004), p. 1, 9-11.

⁷ R. Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: A Theological and Sociological Study* (Eugene, 2007) uses sociological data to analyse entrepreneurial tendencies in more recent English Evangelicalism especially in movements and gatherings, pp. 138-145. 'The historical account is set

Through this one detailed historical study, broader themes of ‘parish’ and ‘mission’ can come into dynamic focus, able to elucidate and inform one another, and these historical specificities also enable an examination of the interplay and tensions between them. Thomas Gaster’s ministry and especially his establishment of All Saints Peckham are presented as a useful and detailed exemplar here, rather than held up as an exception. Parish formation in the nineteenth century is well documented but the role of mission has been neglected.⁸ The close study of this individual case demonstrates a new parochialism in the age of Empire, which drew on the models of mission in India with the Church Missionary Society and then reapplied them to the burgeoning communities of late Victorian Britain, and will be shown to represent a much wider motivation, method and movement than has previously been noted.

What follows in this introduction is a biographical sketch of Thomas Gaster, which lays out the chronological structure and scope of this thesis. The evangelical historical method will be explored and then the field of congregational studies will be introduced. The introduction will end with a chapter overview of the thesis.

Thomas Gaster – Biographical Sketch (1832-1909)

All Saints Peckham was started by Thomas J. Gaster, a clergyman in the Church of England, whose missionary experience in North India infused both the theory and the practice of congregational leadership and formation within Peckham. This initial biographical sketch contextualises the more detailed engagement which follows over the next chapters. Opportunities arising from the historical data then allow for intra- thematic analysis across differing social and historical contexts. These themes have themselves arisen from analysis of the data in conversation with secondary and tertiary sources within the study of congregations, evangelicalism and missiology.

within the context of an analysis of evangelicalism as a contested tradition, exhibiting progressive theological iteration, cultural accommodation – both intentional and the accidental consequence of pragmatic activism – and yet obdurately unyielding conservatism.’ p. 15.

⁸ R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns in Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977); K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge, 2006); P. C. Hammond, *The Parson and the Victorian Parish* (London, 1977).

Only such an intersecting approach could achieve methodological richness for a detailed study of a local, historic expression of evangelicalism in a context of urbanism and Empire. Gaster's role as storyteller and leader will demonstrate where the Indian experiences have informed practices and convictions of the later local mission in Camberwell and Clapham, in which he served, and the Peckham congregation which he pioneered, which in turn gives unique insight into the nature of local mission in Victorian London.

Thomas Joseph Gaster was born in the parish of All Saints Poplar in North London on 12 August 1832, to Thomas and Sarah Gaster. His father was a shipping agent, and both parents were committed members of the congregation.⁹ He was christened shortly afterwards (7 September 1832) and was the eldest of 11 children. He was married in 1857 to Selina Boarman in Ticehurst, Sussex, and had three children, including his eldest son Frank, who died in India, a daughter, Jane, and Percy. 26 Woodstock Road, High Street, Poplar was his family home in 1860¹⁰ and the census confirms it remained his father's house until at least 1881.¹¹ The spectacular parish church shows something of the new-found confidence of this growing East London community, which began the construction of All Saints in 1821, just a year after gaining the status as an independent civic parish with a civic parish council. Thomas' father was described in the 1881 census as being 'widowed, former surveyor of shipping, aged 80'. This stable background and upbringing and a home in Poplar, establish the Gaster family as firmly part of the nineteenth-century middle class. The children lived well, and there is no evidence of infant mortality.

The family were committed churchgoers, members of an Anglican church which was at that time supportive of CMS work amongst Indians from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds. Later letters from Thomas to his parents address them with warmth, and with gratitude for their support of him whilst in India and there is no evidence to suggest that they did not share some of his Evangelical Anglican theology and missionary outlook. Nothing is known, however, of a specific conversion experience,

⁹ T. J. Gaster, letter to CMS London Committee, 12 July 1859. The parish wants to support the mission work in India, and especially the girls school.

¹⁰ T. J. Gaster, letter to CMS London Committee, 5 October 1860.

¹¹ Two other addresses are mentioned in the birth and christenings of his brothers and sisters in the 1840s and 1850s, one appears to be the paternal grandparents' home in Stepney, the other is another address in Poplar.

his education or how he met and married his wife, Selina. But she was a few months older than him and followed him immediately to the mission field of India after their marriage and his ordination as deacon in London in 1857. Given the sacrifices and suffering which she endured as well, it is unlikely that she was in opposition to this evangelical stance.

He was ordained priest in Calcutta by Bishop George Cotton in 1858 and served as a CMS missionary in Agra until 1860, undergoing language study, and engaging in ministry to expatriates and to the indigenous population. In 1861, he moved into the hill station of Simla, where he was closely involved in a renewal of the spiritual life of the small town, and which afforded him some notoriety. On arriving in London in May 1863, he was made curate for St Giles Camberwell, working for the Priest in Charge, Rev. Robert Tapson, and was licensed by Dr Sumner, the Bishop of Winchester. He remained there for 11 months. He then took the senior curacy at Holy Trinity Clapham under the Rev. William Henry Wentworth Atkins Bowyer, where he ministered for two years, making many friends who would support his future work in Peckham. Taking up again with Tapson, he was assigned a district in Peckham from within the parish of St Giles Camberwell, to begin a new church and congregation.

Thus in 1866 T. J. Gaster became first the ‘missionary curate’, then the ‘perpetual curate’ and finally the vicar of All Saints, Blenheim Grove. His son, Rev. Percy Gaster, took charge of the parish for a season from the 1890’s as Thomas became increasingly frail. The parish and congregation which he founded from the basis of door-knocking in 1867 had, by the close of the century, become a thriving church with sizeable infrastructure, healthy finances, and he was regarded as a local leader of influence in the community. During his closing years Thomas Gaster wrote a history of the work, (*A Brief History of the Parish of All Saints Camberwell*); published his sermons and some of his lectures. The congregation was notable for its rapid growth, its theological position as low-church evangelical, its support of mission work at home and abroad, and the strong voluntarism amongst its committed members. He died in 1909, still living in the parish, having handed on the incumbency to Rev. S. J. Carlton (vicar: 1907 to 1919).

Historiographical Considerations

Thomas Gaster's Evangelical Anglicanism was notable, but not unique, in the use of missionary methods, a global perspective developed from a season abroad, and for the concentrated local focus to the work in his parish. His pioneering mentality, strong leadership style and his approach to conflict owe something to his missionary training, but in other respects illustrate shared concerns with fellow Evangelical Anglican clergy of his era. As such, he is demonstrative of a global evangelicalism with a commitment to world missions paired with a concerted local expression of mission in an urban Western setting. The historical and theological data of his case proves invaluable for wider study of Victorian evangelicalism and reintroduces the importance of the history of leadership styles into congregational studies. As Green adds, there is need for an approach that 'integrates the insights of social history with those of church history and the history of ideas'.¹²

Gaster's All Saints adapted energetically and flexibly to local challenges and opportunities, whilst retaining an essentially conservative approach to doctrinal innovations. Much use of his historical case can be made for those seeking a model of energetic missionary churchmanship today that can meet fresh challenges in an urban context, especially for those from within an evangelical tradition. These missionary-minded Evangelicals drew many of their methods, either consciously or unconsciously, from the pragmatisms of successful business and corporate governance practices. Careful historical work will discover Gaster on his own terms, holding back from either inappropriate criticism or unwise appropriation. Thomas Gaster managed a successful synthesis of mission and ministry, drawing together domestic and imperial considerations, but close study will also reveal the unvarnished portrait of a man in his own time, culture and context.

A fresh approach is needed to re-examine the churches in England during the fifty-year period between 1855 and 1905. Inspired by figures such as Thomas Chalmers, this was a time of resurgent church growth under the

¹² B. Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman; Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England* (Springfield, 1976), pp. 1-10, 106, 199-125. S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline, Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 10, 21.

watchful eye of Church of England clergymen who oversaw a response to the needs of burgeoning urbanisation. Arthur Burns writes that: ‘For many contemporaries, as for future historians, the nineteenth-century experience of the Anglican Church was defined by the pastoral challenge of the city.’¹³ A new breed of cleric built on the growing energy of nineteenth-century Britain, harnessed the spiritual vitality of an increasingly confident laity, and took advantage of the increasing flexibility within the structures of the Church of England. Together this led to an unprecedented time of commissioning and building new churches, establishing parishes and forming new ministries and mission organisations.¹⁴ In the example of a missionary motivation for the parish, the interest in Empire, especially where it interacts with mission history, British social and urban history, theology and congregational studies all converge. There has been a tendency to examine the interplay of one or two of these disciplines but few have successfully examined the impact of returning missionaries on the parish ideal or specific parishes.¹⁵ The British Empire and British missionaries had a complex relationship, and the ambivalence of one to the other could easily be overlooked, especially if the assumption was maintained that the motivations and methods of both converged seamlessly. As Andrew Porter suggests:

Historians have long tended to treat missionary activity within a distinct national context, seeing it as one dimension of essentially national empire-building projects, but for many missionaries and society organizers this was far from the reality.¹⁶

Keith Robbins offers this corrective to the isolation of disciplines:

No understanding of British history is possible without grappling with the relationship between religion, politics and society. How that

¹³ A. Burns, ‘Case Study: The Bethnal Green Churches Fund’ [http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/projects/Bethnal_Green_case_study.pdf], p. 1.

¹⁴ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 405, 411.

¹⁵ S. S. Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good: Culture, Faith, Empire, and World in the Foreign Missions of the Church of England, 1850–1915* (Grand Rapids, 2014).

¹⁶ A. Porter, ‘Church History, History of Christianity, Religious History: Some Reflections on British Missionary Enterprise Since the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Church History*, 71, (3) (September 2002), pp. 555–584. He also mentions C. P. Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden, 1990); H. Cnattingius, *Bishops and Societies: A Study of Anglican Colonial and Missionary Expansion, 1698–1850* (London, 1952); T. E. Yates, *Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad: The Missionary Policies of Henry Venn and Their Repercussions upon the Anglican Episcopate of the Colonial Period 1841–1872* (Thesis, Uppsala, 1978).

should be done, however, is a different matter. Historians of religion, who have frequently thought of themselves as ecclesiastical historians, have had one set of preoccupations. Political historians have had another.¹⁷

Through the Church Missionary Society, Thomas and Selina Gaster were part of a global community that sent and received workers and missionaries all over the world. The 'cause of missions' which once deployed them remained a priority for their local giving and personal investment but surface readings of local congregations fail to observe that the mission task, to which so many resources were dedicated, carried within it a clear and refining motivation which allowed the church to retain its conviction and local mission focus.¹⁸ Historians in more recent years have sought to redress reductionism and isolationism in favour of a growing appreciation of the sensitivities and sympathies of many of the missionaries. The global nature of mission, with the ebb and flow of individuals and ideas also meant that the territories were not culturally or methodologically static. New initiatives in Africa could well be reapplied into India, Nova Scotia or Liverpool and vice versa.¹⁹

¹⁷ K. Robbins, 'Editor's Preface' in S. J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom, 1815-1914* (Harlow, 2008), p. xi.

¹⁸ See some of the literature on this subject: A. A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (London, 1993), p. 111; A. D. I. J. Macnaghten, *Daniel Corrie, His Family and Friends* (London, 1969); K. W. Jones, 'Review of A. A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53 (1) (February 1994), pp. 264-266; K. C. Engel, 'The SPCK and the American Revolution: The Limits of International Protestantism', *Church History* (2012); A. G. L. Haig, 'The Church, Universities and Learning in Later Victorian England', *The Historical Journal*, 29, (1) (March 1986), pp. 186-201; W. E. Houghton, 'Victorian Anti-Intellectualism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13, (3) (1952), pp. 291-313; T. Thomas, 'Foreign Mission and Missionaries in Victorian Britain', in J. Wolffe (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain: Culture and Empire* (5) (Manchester, 1997); A. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire* (Manchester, 2004); R. E. Frykenberg, 'Christian Missions and the Raj', in N. Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 107-131; S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, 1964); R. Schweller, "'Mosaic Arabs': Jews and Gentlemen in Disraeli's Young England Trilogy", *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 24 (2) (2006), pp. 55-69; H. J. Sharkey, 'Christians Among Muslims: The Church Missionary Society in the Northern Sudan', *Journal of African History*, 43 (1) (2002), pp. 51-75; R. J. Tolen, 'Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesman: The Salvation Army in British India', *American Ethnologist*, 18 (1) (1991), pp. 106-125; P. van der Veer, 'Jeffrey Cox, Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power', *History of Religions*, 43 (3) (2004), pp. 255-255; P. Welch, 'Constructing Colonial Christianities: With Particular Reference to Anglicanism in Australia, ca. 1850-1940', *Journal of Religious History*, 32 (2008), pp. 222-222; G. Bremner, 'Nation and Empire in the Government Architecture of Mid-Victorian London: The Foreign and India Office Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal* (2005); G. A. Bremner, "'Some Imperial Institute': Architecture, Symbolism, and the Ideal of Empire in Late Victorian Britain, 1887-93", *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 62 (1) (2003), pp. 50-73.

¹⁹ e.g. F. Bowie et al. (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present. Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Oxford, 1993).

The parish and the social environment have likewise given rise to excellent studies, most notably that of K. D. M. Snell and Dominic Erdozain on urban mission, sport and recreation, alongside the contributions of specialists, such as Patricia Meldrum on Scottish Evangelicals and Pamela Walker on the Salvation Army. Snell's social history gives due attention to the weave of 'parish' into the fiscal, social, and spiritual lives of the English populace, demonstrating that the persistence of the parish as a civic reality was intentionally holistic and purposefully integrated. The establishment of new ecclesiastical parishes in the nineteenth century was a sign of a growing confidence in the local expression of life, community and faith, regardless of churchmanship. Snell, working with statistical analysis of new saints' dedications and the formation of new parishes, demonstrates the scale of this growth. Between 1835 and 1875, there were 3765 new dedications, and in the decades leading up to 1896 there were 3658 new ecclesiastical parishes formed; with two boom years of 1844 (193 parishes) and 1866 (113 parishes).²⁰ Both these boom years followed immediately on from substantial changes in legislation enabling churches to be formed in districts (1844) or entirely new parishes (1866). A fifth of all Anglican churches had been built after 1801, most since the 1830s, with ten million pounds spent. In the second half of the century, Snell estimates that the figure spent could be tripled, and at times during the season from 1835 to 1875 new churches were being completed at a staggering rate of one every four days.²¹

The 'Building on History' project, delivered in partnership with the Open University, King's College London, Lambeth Palace and the London Diocese gives ample opportunity to examine case studies, such as those by John Wolffe for Finchley and Arthur Burns for Bethnal Green, as well as suggesting avenues for discovering, sharing and learning from stories of congregational history.²² Wolffe suggests that these stories have the capacity both to confirm tales of the worst excesses of clerical

²⁰ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 409-414.

²¹ J. Wolffe, 'What can the Twenty-First Century Church of England Learn from the Victorians?', *Ecclesiology*, 9 (2013), pp. 205-222, offers an alternative to the 7423 numbered by Snell in the 60 years before 1896: 'Between 1831 and 1901 it has been estimated that there was a net increase of 5485 in the total number of Church of England churches, while many of the 12,000 or so churches already standing in 1831 were subjected to extensive restoration and reordering or even complete rebuilding.' p. 206, citing A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (London, 1976), p. 28.

²² A. Burns, 'Case Study: The Bethnal Green Churches Fund' [http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/projects/Bethnal_Green_case_study.pdf].

incompetence as well as: ‘several stories that illustrate the capacity of the mid-nineteenth-century church to renew itself.’²³

Erdozain’s perceptive and detailed study shines on the world of sport, faith and moral improvement in nineteenth-century society, all set against the backdrop of moral panic which gave rise to new initiatives for the improvement of society, and a sacred reappropriation of leisure, sport and exercise for urban men. Pamela Walker brings new attention to the vigorous activity of the Salvation Army, the role of women in leadership within this evangelical expression, and the transforming effect of this fast-growing church on the emerging urban realities, especially amongst the poorer sectors of society. Meldrum’s social and theological history focuses on the under-studied Evangelical Anglicans of Scotland, and points out their support for evangelism, missions and the vibrancy of new parish life in a different context.²⁴ However, these studies pay scant attention to the impact of imperialism, missions or returning missionaries to the development of the parish.

Though Snell engages briefly with the effect of CPAS, the analysis fails to engage convincingly with the importance of CMS in the spending priorities of local parishes or of the missionary movement either specifically or generally, or the interplay of England and Wales with regard to imperialism or globalisation.²⁵

It is the confluence of these important areas of study in the life and ministry of Thomas Gaster that has so much to contribute to the body of literature in all fields. A missionary archive from India that gave rise to a London church-planter links two

²³ J. Wolffe, ‘Case Study: Finchley’ [http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/projects/Finchley_case_study.pdf], p. 2. Also J. Wolffe, ‘What can the Twenty-First Century Church Learn from the Victorians? Hooker Lecture 2010 – Exeter Cathedral and Marjon University College, Plymouth’ and Wolffe, ‘Twenty-First Century’, op.cit.

²⁴ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*; D. Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion* (Woodbridge, 2010); P. Meldrum, *Conscience and Compromise: Forgotten Evangelicals of Nineteenth-Century Scotland* (PhD Thesis, University of Stirling, 2006); K. Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984* (Edinburgh, 1989); H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study in the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester, 1961); H. McLeod, ‘Review of M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters. vol. 2: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity, 1791–1859*’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 38 (1999), pp. 385–391; P. Walker, *Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, 2001).

²⁵ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 7, 397.

disciplines. The two-way interplay of Mission and Empire likewise informs the theology and practice of parochial leadership. Moreover, the specific study of Gaster's missionary style of leadership will contribute greater historical texture to understandings of the fifty-year boom in church building and church growth in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

So what of the approach to historical study that this thesis will follow? Noll, Bebbington and Rawlyk are by no means alone in charting the development of historiographical approaches to evangelicalism.²⁶ They argue that pre-1950s studies explored evangelical church history along broadly denominational lines, and often specific to a certain country or tradition. The development of historical study suggesting that the influence of the culture upon the theology and practise of evangelicalism had been underplayed began in earnest after the 1950s. Later, Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* was pivotal in encouraging cross-regional comparative studies of evangelicalism, especially between Britain and North America, and marks also a turning point in the proliferation of historical interest in evangelical history and the scholarship which continues.²⁷

They articulate certain concerns:

In an age of intellectual ferment, when older standards of 'objectivity' are being challenged from the intellectual Left and Right, the kind of rigorously professional scholarship that a generation of evangelical historians exploited to pursue their interests as both believers and historians now requires a more self-conscious defence than such historians have usually offered.²⁸

²⁶ R. A. Solloway, 'Church and Society: Recent Trends in Nineteenth-Century Religious History', *Journal of British Studies*, 11 (2) (1972), pp. 142–159. Also M. A. Noll *et al.* (eds.), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700–1990* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 411–415. For these evangelical historians, historiography is also shaped by hermeneutics of biblical history as in: 'Historiography has been an ongoing tussle between classical Roman and biblical notions of what it is, and of what value it is to 're-member' the past.' D. L. Jeffrey, '(Pre) Figuration: Masterplot and Meaning in Biblical History' in C. G. Bartholomew *et al.* (eds.), *"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, 2003), pp. 363–396 (373).

²⁷ G. M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford, 1980).

²⁸ Noll *et al.* (eds.), *Evangelicalism*, p. 412.

This concern that pre-suppositions may be forced into the open does give opportunity for recapturing areas which might have previously been neglected, but which nevertheless enrich historical study such as the history of minorities, the influence of women, and the renewed interest in evangelical movements outside the North Atlantic region. Both historians of evangelicalism and contemporary commentators have enriched their studies with a greater appreciation of culture, narrative, spirituality and cross-disciplinary insights.²⁹ There has been a greater emphasis to the experiential and charismatic elements in evangelicalism as well as a greater interest in the evangelicals of a resurgent Global South.³⁰ For others the demise of the ubiquitous secularization thesis has necessitated a critical re-appraisal of earlier assumptions. Secularization was significantly delayed according to Brown and McLeod who move the demise of public Christianity in Britain into the 1960s.³¹ And though, by contrast, Erdozain argues for the seeds of secularization as being already firmly planted within the Victorian Evangelical church, suggesting it was a self-inflicted wound received as it wrestled with modernity and became beguiled by recreation and pleasure:³² ‘In the British context the cause was not the systematic, rational penetration of science and technology, so much as the quiet calcification of misuse.’³³ Thus, according to Erdozain, secularization was neither an early nor an inevitable process, potentially more influenced by the theological and strategic choices of the Evangelicals themselves than by external factors. Erdozain’s approach focuses on the possible reasons for the demise of evangelical strength, such as choices to abandon gospel proclamation in favour of recreation, and theological changes which hampered growth. This study will point slightly earlier, to the pre-emptive

²⁹ A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (London, 1986); D. D. Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000* (Cardiff, 2011); Meldrum, *Conscience and Compromise*.

³⁰ B. Stanley, *Twentieth-Century World Christianity*, in Donald M. Lewis (ed.), *Christianity Reborn* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 52-86.

³¹ H. McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 7, 9. Though there remain proponents of a general theory of the ‘erosion of the supernatural’ in secularization theory, such as S. Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford, 1996). See C. G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London, 2001) and *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 2006).

³² Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*, pp. 1-41.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 201, and H. McLeod, ‘Thews and Sinews: Nonconformity and Sport’ in D. W. Bebbington and T. Larsen (eds.), *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (London, 2003), p. 44.

conditions for growth within Evangelicalism, which owe much to the effects of missionary theology and practice upon the English parish. Thus both studies will suggest that there are theological and methodological strands which contributed to growth and when neglected led to decline.³⁴

Bebbington's initial early articulation of evangelicalism is bold, and his skill is in presenting a clear and easily grasped thesis and antithesis, evidenced, for example, in the contrast between 'positivist' and 'idealist' schools of historiography and which has also given rise to the Bebbington quadrilateral, which either implicitly (as in McGrath) or explicitly (as in Stott) forms a grid for identifying and grounding broad descriptions of evangelicalism. At a point of first principles, the purpose and method of history predetermines many of the outcomes – the idealist identifying with the human element, the positivist emphasising the universals of data, and looking for certain types of sociological markers. *Patterns in History*, demonstrates Bebbington's stance, tending to the idealist.³⁵

In achieving his synthesis, he clearly uses mainstream historical techniques, rejecting both Marxist and Weberian theses in order to achieve a distinctively Christian historiography whilst guarding against the criticism that evangelical historians of Evangelicalism perpetuate an ideologically closed system which fails to stand up to examination in the wider historical community.³⁶

Bebbington affirms certain knowable statements about humanity and the world, acknowledging their indebtedness to revelation and the role of Scripture within the world³⁷ and communicates an essentially Christian optimism, a credal and evangelical conviction, a belief in hope within and beyond history:

³⁴ S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 10-19, is also highly critical of historians who rely too closely on the contemporary markers of religious adherence, such as institutional loyalty, and suggests a more circumspect approach based on the evidence of Yorkshire industrial towns which had religious beliefs but less institutional adherence.

³⁵ D. W. Bebbington, *Patterns in History* (Leicester, 1979), pp. 147-153.

³⁶ T. Larsen, 'The Reception Given Evangelicalism in Modern Britain since its Publication in 1989' in Haykin and Stewart (eds.), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism* (Nottingham, 2008), pp. 21-36, and Bebbington's response to critics in the same volume, pp. 417-432. Here he maintains the quadrilateral, and supports the affirmation in activism that it was a fresh response in evangelicalism, and rooted in assurance of salvation. He also points out that the assumption that evangelicalism is deeply affected by its social context has remained largely unchallenged.

³⁷ Bebbington, *Patterns in History*: 'The starting point of historiography is human beings.' p. 160.

A Christian understanding supplies something which historicism lacks: confidence in the future. Its keynote of hope is grounded in the twin beliefs that God is guiding history forward in a straight line and that in due time it will reach its goal.³⁸

The goal and the outcome of history are ‘already assured... God will continue to direct the course of events up to their end when the final outcome will be made plain.’³⁹ Bebbington re-articulates the concept and theological matrix of Providence⁴⁰ yet avoids the determinist interpretation of Providence by reminding the reader of the suffering of Christ upon the cross which demonstrates God's intervention and encounter with history, showing it to be both non-obvious and yet ‘crucial’ to authentic Christian historical investigation and study. He writes: ‘The major claims of Christianity about history are summed up by the cross’.⁴¹ Crucicentrism, a term he later develops as a major theme for evangelicalism, is paramount within historical study also, for evangelicalism is not to be understood as a mere party spirit but an ideological framework, a philosophy, a worldview.

That evangelical historians are themselves often historians of evangelicalism may leave several open to charges of subjectivism or overly theological emphases. They might be tempted to develop a history that focuses on theological levers and ideological drivers rather than cultural and political influencers upon events.⁴² An example of this is Mark Noll, who articulates his historiographical approach most clearly in *Turning Points*, where he identifies several underlying convictions for the study of the history of Christianity, rooting them in Matthew 28 and Acts 1. Noll assumes a providential framework, arguing for the acting sovereignty of God over global human events not only over the inner workings of the parochial church community. Therefore, the challenge for the analytical church historian is compounded by the divine protagonist: ‘Whatever the meanderings of the churches

³⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 175.

⁴² M. A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 2006), pp. 50, 75, 88, suggests that the issue of slavery in the civil war was in many ways a deeply theological crisis. Also K. T. Dollar, ‘Review of *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*’, *Journal of Southern Religion*, 9 (2006), p. 1. [<http://jsr.fsu.edu/Volume9/Dollar.htm>]. Accessed 30 December 2013.

and individuals, they are and have been sustained not merely by human structures and powers but by the presence of Christ.⁴³ This framework acknowledges the limitations of historical investigation whilst affirming the reality of the active presence of Christ over and within history.⁴⁴ Moreover, Noll gives due thought to tensions of inward and outward movement, which are especially insightful when studying missionary spirituality, methods and motivations. The intra-confessional historiography of Marsden and Noll is not without its profound critics. Sweet⁴⁵ calls Marsden and Noll the prime examples of evangelical ‘observer-participant’ historians and ‘the most arresting phenomena in American religious scholarship’, but nevertheless criticises the approach for a neglect of Wesleyan perspectives of evangelicalism and for over-orientation of the perspectives on reformed theologies in assessment of fundamentalism and evangelicalism:⁴⁶

An awareness that the past has shaped a distinct tradition that can be identified and interpreted helps evangelicals to see that this past, however relativized by history, is real and active in the present. In other words, evangelical historians are forcing evangelicalism to see itself as an heir of its own past.⁴⁷

Despite this possible vulnerability, Euan Cameron's *Interpreting Christian History* also argues for a confessional approach to the study of Evangelicalism and Christian history in general. He maintains that:

Historians who take critical theory seriously have agreed that no single historical perspective is satisfactory or all-sufficient: indeed, historians knew this long before critical theorists pointed it out. Nevertheless, they argue that by triangulating from several different perspectives, by

⁴³ M. A. Noll, *Turning Points* (Grand Rapids, 1997), p. 11.

⁴⁴ R. Williams, *Why Study the Past: The Quest for the Historical Church* (London, 2014), p. 88-91, explores this tension whilst affirming the nature of the Body of Christ as a confirming community which values the past and seeks to use it to challenge the present.

⁴⁵ L. I. Sweet, ‘Wise as Serpents, Innocent as Doves: The New Evangelical Historiography’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 56 (3) (Autumn 1988), pp. 397-416 (412-414), explores the implications of this in the approaches of Marsden and Noll up to 1987.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

exploring a multiplicity of diverse and even conflicting accounts of the same historical process found in different sources, one can still infer something useful about the past.⁴⁸

Cameron argues then, that it is possible to avoid both the extremes of thoroughgoing relativism and dogmatism. A Christian and a church are never free from the society and culture to which they belong, they are intermingled and confused, but this does not mean that there is nothing that can meaningfully be said to be both Christian and historical. The historian, whether relativist or objectivist, never has a God's eye view but can nevertheless have a trained eye, an eye which can make distinctions and comparisons, can weigh up and assess through an intersection of research techniques.⁴⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, whose long career as bishop, theologian, missionary and commentator, both in India and in the West, has had such a profound effect on contemporary evangelical scholarship, has a peculiar pertinence for this study which draws on both Indian and British missionary histories, theologies and practices.⁵⁰ Newbigin's historiographical approach is therefore ideal for the historical study of missionary evangelicalism, in that it lends one set of tools to both disciplines. For him, Christ is the clue to history, and the finality of Christ points to the interpretive key of faith and reason in the person of Christ, and he provides also the Archimedean point and the revealed *telos*.⁵¹ His historiography coalesces with his missionary epistemology:

The message of Christianity is essentially a story, a report of things which have happened... this is a statement of a fact of history which the original evangelists are careful to locate exactly within the continuum of recorded human history. The story itself does not arise out of dialogue, it simply has to be told.⁵²

⁴⁸ E. Cameron, *Interpreting Christian History: The Challenge of the Churches' Past* (Oxford, 2005), p. 9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ L. Newbigin, *Finality of Christ* (London, 1969) in P. Weston (ed.), *Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian, A Reader* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 65f; Newbigin, 'Kingdom of God and the Idea of Progress' (1941) in G. Wainwright, *Signs Amid the Rubble* (Grand Rapids, 2003), pp. 1-55; L. Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, 1989), pp. 103-115.

⁵¹ L. Newbigin *Finality of Christ*, p. 57, 65.

⁵² L. Newbigin, *Religious Pluralism: A Missiological Approach* (Newbigin, 1993) *Studia Missionalia* 42, pp. 227-244, cited by Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian: A Reader*, p. 176, 177.

So Newbiggin declares that history and gospel proclamation inhabit the same conceptual space of 'story' to be told by a witness, expert or otherwise. If Sweet is right, the 'participant observer' historians have potential to deliver a greater clarity of insight and appreciation into the semiotic universe of the historical data without straying into either slavish hagiography or sloppy providentialism. Bebbington, Cameron and Newbiggin share appreciation for story, the reality of human weakness, and the declaration of a Christ-arche which have the potential to converge with some of the insights of congregational studies to bring a renewed interest to the story of missionary parochialism which is this study's object.

J. I. Packer warned in *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem* that: 'Anyone who proposes to define the word 'evangelical' must go carefully.'⁵³ Evangelicalism must be articulated theologically as well as within its social and historical context, for without the self-asserted theological distinctions it cannot be understood richly within a wider Christian confessionalism. Hywel Jones calls evangelicalism a spectrum term.⁵⁴ Packer denies the homogeneity of the movement, yet roots the term historically, identifying its use amongst German Lutherans.⁵⁵ Diarmaid MacCulloch brings this sense of history and spectrum together, writing that:

'Evangelicalism' is the religious outlook which makes the primary point of Christian reference the Good News of the Evangelion, or the text of Scripture generally; it is a conveniently vague catch-all term which can be applied across the board, except to the very small minority of English religious rebels who proceeded further towards continental radicalism. In the nineteenth century the word was appropriated in the English-speaking world to describe a party within Protestantism and within the Church of England...

⁵³ J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem* (Oxford, 1978), p. 5.

⁵⁴ G. R. Curry, 'Evangelicals in the Church of England', *Churchman*, 111 (4) (1997), p. 1, cites Hywel Jones' address *Is Christ the Only Way?* in Newcastle upon Tyne on 21 January 1997.

⁵⁵ Packer, *Identity Problem*, p. 5.

MacCulloch further suggests the term can be applied:

Generally to any people or activities, both Anglican and Nonconformist, that stood in line with the eighteenth-century awakening and its offshoots, the movement which by then was called the evangelical revival.⁵⁶

Thomas Schmidt suggests that Evangelicalism defies ‘religious mapmakers’ and that:

The phenomenon spans a bewildering diversity of opinions, denominations and social groups, and any attempt to explain or give examples leaves some insiders feeling poorly represented. Since there is no governing body distinguishing insiders from outsiders, evangelicalism cannot be described as a *system* with clearly defined borders but must be understood in terms of central principles. In other words, it is not so much about what is excluded as what is *affirmed*.⁵⁷

Thus it can be seen that affirmation of central, fundamental or primal emphases and doctrines can go somewhere towards anchoring the evangelical flotilla on the same ocean floor. It is established by commentators and scholars both from within and without that Evangelicalism is both historical in its self-understanding, and a spectrum within Christianity at large. What might these defining features be and, in terms of emphasis, which is primary? One of the most highly respected and frequently read protagonists of British Anglican Evangelicalism was J. C. Ryle, who wrote and spoke extensively and passionately about evangelical religion in the eighteenth century, and the challenges facing the nineteenth-century church.⁵⁸ He articulated Evangelical self-understanding in which Ryle presented the following five defining features of Evangelical religion:

⁵⁶ D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (London, 1996), p. 2.

⁵⁷ T. E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow?: Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Leicester, 1995), p. 17.

⁵⁸ I. D. Farley, *J. C. Ryle: First Bishop of Liverpool: A Study in Mission Amongst the Masses* (Carlisle, 2000), p. 237. P. xxi suggests he had an influence second only to Charles Spurgeon.

The absolute supremacy it assigns to Scripture, as the only rule of faith and practice, the only test of truth, the only judge of controversy; The depth of prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption; The paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the nature of the salvation which he has wrought out for man; The high place it assigns to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man; The importance which it attaches to the outward and visible work of the Holy Ghost in the life of man.⁵⁹

It was Ryle's conviction that losing any one of these features would lead to a less vibrant and less authentic Christianity and thus for him 'evangelical' was not a neutral technical term but intended to serve as a deep rallying call to godly troops to contest for vital religion on the battlefield of ideas. 'Evangelical' was an aspirational term; it was heroic theology. For Ryle, Evangelical religion was sound, true doctrine and Christian living, in contradistinction to unzealous shallow Protestantism, folk nominalism or the High Churchmanship of the Tractarians, and most definitely in contradistinction to the Church of Rome. Hylson-Smith wrote that:

Evangelicalism itself was affected as a result of having to face such issues and as a consequence of the whole controversy with Tractarianism there was a certain re-alignment within evangelicalism.⁶⁰

As Ian Farley writes: 'As early as 1855 Ryle described two-thirds of all professing Christians in England as unsound in their beliefs.'⁶¹ The articulation of theology for evangelicals was often conducted in a contested space, regardless of denominational allegiance, hence Spurgeon's exasperation during the Baptist Downgrade controversy.⁶² So despite the assumption of unity and collegiality, Ryle and many

⁵⁹ J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied: Being Plain Statements on Disputed Points in Religion from the Standpoint of an Evangelical Churchman* (London, 1885), pp. 2-5.

⁶⁰ Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals*, p. 118.

⁶¹ Farley, *J. C Ryle*, p. 61.

⁶² H. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford, 1998), p. 46.

contemporaneous evangelicals can be said to exclude certain doctrines and practices and vigorously oppose what they considered to be erroneous ideas. Harris suggests that many of these objections to liberal or high beliefs and practices were articulated as flowing out of the first feature of evangelicalism, namely Scriptural supremacy:

They particularly held fast to the supremacy of Scripture, the direct access by individuals to God by faith, salvation by grace alone, and true regeneration as the work only of the Holy Ghost.⁶³

A century later, echoes of Ryle's defining features can nevertheless be seen in the unifying definitions offered by John Stott who, in turn, is largely in agreement with Bebbington's condensed four-fold description of the evangelical importance of crucicentrism, biblicism, conversionism, and activism.⁶⁴ Bebbington states:

The holy life among evangelicals had four fundamental parameters: it opened with conversion, it was sustained by the power of the cross, it was fed by reading the Bible, and it issued in vigorous activity.⁶⁵

Stott underlines that: 'although evangelicalism has been continuously moulded by its environment, nevertheless, a common core has remained remarkably constant down the centuries.'⁶⁶ Even though, as Allert suggests, diversity could conceivably lead to contested definitions and a struggle for the central defining space of evangelicalism, in the case of Stott and Packer, the ability to voice the essential unities gave rise to opportunities for leadership and influence within the movement and across

⁶³ Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals*, p. 118.

⁶⁴ D. W. Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle, 2000), pp. 51-62, explores the shared values and theologies between Wesleyan and Calvinist evangelicals. Bebbington further clarifies the holiness streams as High Church, Calvinist, Wesleyan and Keswick. Under this scheme Gaster and also Christopher of Oxford share traits of both Calvinist and Keswick spiritualities. The Oxford conference hosted by Canon Christopher which predated the later Keswick: 'it was certainly evangelical, for the usual quadrilateral is observable.' p. 77.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶⁶ J. Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, 2005), pp. 27, 154; D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), pp. 3-19; Though earlier Packer (*Identity Problem*, pp. 15-23) and A. McGrath (*Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London, 1996), pp. 49-88.) See also C. D. Allert, 'What Are We Trying to Conserve? Evangelicalism and *Sola Scriptura*', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 76 (4) (2004), pp. 327-348.

denominational boundaries. Being able to articulate the current ‘common core’ remains vitally important. Stott and Packer were also able to shift the debate, self-understanding and public perception of the movement in their articulation of clear distinctions between fundamentalism and evangelicalism.⁶⁷

Alister McGrath brings the defining features of Ryle into a more contemporary setting without losing sight of the need for definitional simplicity with his description of evangelicalism as colligatory rather than just a spectrum, containing certain binding concepts which knit the logic of the whole together, and without which there is little apparent unity:

Most evangelicals and well-informed observers of the movement would suggest that evangelicalism is essentially colligatory, in that it finds its identity in relation to themes and concerns, including the following: A focus, both devotionally and theologically, on the person of Jesus Christ, especially his death on the cross; The identification of Scripture as the ultimate authority in matters of spirituality, doctrine and ethics; An emphasis upon conversion or new birth as a life-changing religious experience; A concern for sharing the faith, especially through evangelism.⁶⁸

Warner maintains that Evangelicalism is a contested tradition which rather resists definition, as it perpetually exhibits progressive theological iteration, and cultural accommodation, which is both the ‘intentional and accidental consequence of pragmatic activism’ and that it continues to display an ‘obdurately unyielding conservatism.’⁶⁹ And thus it may be that an historical method which values the combination of adaptive methodology, cultural accommodation, and theological

⁶⁷ J. I. Packer, *‘Fundamentalism’ and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles* (Leicester, 1958), p. 19; J. Stott, *Christ the Controversialist* (London, 1970), p. 42. See also Stott’s ten differences between fundamentalism and evangelicalism in *Evangelical Truth*, pp. 20-24. On this debate, see Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, pp. 313, 11-15; J. Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London, 1977) and J. S. Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture* (San Francisco, 1991), pp. 13-36.

⁶⁸ A. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Leicester, 1996), p. 22. D. B. Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 191.

⁶⁹ R. Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: Theological and Sociological Study* (Eugene, 2007), p. 15; G. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals. Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, C.1800-1850* (Eugene, 2001), pp. 8, 9, 39-41, 48.

conservatism, and which has always been a hallmark of successful mission, may generate a more accurate historical analysis. In this vein, other analysts, such as Neuhaus, point out that it is the bewildering array of self-selecting pioneers and experimental leadership which makes evangelicalism unique, suggest that the approach to leadership is in itself the defining feature:

Almost all observers of our religious situation are struck by the way in which evangelicalism presents itself wondrously — sometimes maddeningly — as an individualistic and entrepreneurial phenomenon. The leadership of evangelicalism lies less with denominational officers or theological faculties than with the spiritual entrepreneurs who have built their own constituencies and are frequently competing with one another's constituencies in a vast array of parachurch organisations.⁷⁰

This demonstrates the challenges presented to the historian in defining evangelicalism solely using traditional historical or theological tools, especially in relation to the two contested identities of the Evangelical and the Church of England.⁷¹ The missiological approach gives focus in the dynamic tension and interactions of these two contested identities which would be lost in preoccupation of how the relationship of evangelicals to the Church. New Parochialism is best understood historically and missiologically as in interaction of missionary leadership to local contextualisation, as it was demonstrated within the Church of England. This would therefore suggest that disciplines designed to interrogate and understand leadership and missiology would benefit the historian. This is tellingly observed by Neuhaus who suggested that it was Evangelicalism's approach to leadership which is its defining feature, rather than its denominational allegiance, and by Wolffe who points out this underlying sense of unity as a movement despite the observable divisions.⁷²

Charles Sumner, Bishop of Winchester, a Diocese which until 1905 included South London, and to be the bishop during the era of the establishment of Gaster in Peckham, was explicit in this instance, preaching to the CMS in 1828 that: 'religious

⁷⁰ R. J. Neuhaus, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (London, 1996), p. 182.

⁷¹ G. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, pp. 391-398. Points also to legal, political and cultural factors.

⁷² J. Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham, 2006), p. 218. 'Nevertheless, despite all their visible disunity, evangelicals could still be powerfully inspired by their consciousness of themselves as an invisibly united movement.'

societies must be directed by calculation, and not by enthusiasm.’⁷³

This identification of ‘spiritual entrepreneurs’ is also crucial for making best use of the insights of the convergence of congregational studies and missiology. The practitioners who made up and inspired the parish method of the missionary and evangelical parochialism were deeply influenced by the practical, calculating and systematic labour of the missions and the mission agencies:

The meticulous way in which many missionaries noted down what they saw, heard and experienced, and the systematic way in which mission societies preserved and catalogued them, give us a unique insight into development of societies and communities across the globe.⁷⁴

Mission histories and the accountability of organisations required missionaries to report home their activity, and the calculated effect of their labours.⁷⁵ Missiologists are adept in the disciplines of reading fragmentary or one-sided archives and nevertheless of interpreting a praxis-driven or praxis-led history. Kritzingers suggests in a South African reading that this can:

guide the researcher to ask who the missionaries were, how they analysed the context, what their worldview was, how they interpreted Scripture etc. It is only by ‘climbing into their shoes’ that we can begin to discern their presuppositions and prejudices, and to sense how those affected their mission approach and their representations of [African] people.⁷⁶

⁷³ Bebbington, *Holiness*, p. 42, in *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society*, 12 (London), p. 14.

⁷⁴ K. Kritzingers, ‘Using Archives Missiologically: A Perspective from South Africa’, in H. Lems (ed.), *Mission History and Mission Archives*, p. 26. See also J. Peel, ‘Problems and Opportunities in an Anthropologist’s Use of a Missionary Archive’, in R. A. Bickers and R. Stoen (eds.) *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* (Richmond, 1986).

⁷⁵ H. Lems (ed.), *Mission History and Mission Archives* (Utrecht, 2011), pp. 12-14, 20-21; Philip Laryea is clear about the overlap of mission practice and congregational history: ‘Keeping a church chronicle is a discipline that belongs to the period of mission Christianity...the keeping of church chronicles, station diaries and log books is no longer fashionable; the discipline is no longer part of the curriculum in the seminaries as it used to be in the past.’ p. 47.

⁷⁶ Kritzingers, ‘Using Archives Missiologically’, p. 27.

Both within the church growth movements and from the writing of social anthropologists and ethnographers, the role of leadership is seldom ignored, and in the area of missions during the late nineteenth century the role of missionaries as activists and leaders is nevertheless so universal as to be taken for granted. Stanley suggests that the activism had occasion to confuse twin ideals of civilising and evangelising, but even if that was the case in individual situations, leadership and activism, especially in pioneering contexts were undeniable.⁷⁷

A true appreciation of leadership within mission or parish is, for some, the key to unlocking an understanding of community and congregation. Evangelical concepts of leadership do not necessarily assume an ordained leader – the absence of ordained leadership, or the existence of empowered laity can be just as defining of missionary evangelicalism. Leadership could make the difference between the flourishing and failure of two theologically alike congregations — it is invariably a determining factor. Avenues for this discussion are deftly raised by Cameron, Richter *et al.* who draw attention to the use, misuse and communication of power, and where Davies suggests that from his perspective as an anthropologist, the issue of leadership is always one of power.⁷⁸ Other scholars of congregation point instead to decision making processes as indicators of leadership and spiritual and social health, conflict resolution, stakeholders and other insights for organisational studies and theology.

In the era under scrutiny, and in the field of missions, it was readily acknowledged that the dynamism of individual leaders was as much a contributing factor to success as the specifics of institution or theology.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ B. Stanley, 'Christianity and Civilisation in English Evangelical Missionary Thought, 1792-1857' in B. Stanley (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, 2001), pp. 169-197, especially p. 186-188.

⁷⁸ P. Chambers, 'Sociological Strand', p. 202; D. Davies, 'Anthropological Strand', pp. 188, 194, in H. Cameron, P. Richter *et al.* (eds.), *Studying Local Congregations* (London, 2005).

⁷⁹ D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, 1991), p. 336; E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men, and Its Work* (London, 1899), pp. 130, 144, 155. Stock is assiduous in his recording of the names of the key leaders and individuals involved in the running of organisations and specifically mission societies (see 373, 374, 395, 444).

For the leaders of the Church Missionary Society were not men wholly absorbed in the Society's business, and unable to pay attention to public affairs or the general interests of religion. On the contrary they were men of the world in the best sense, and took a prominent part in all the movements for the public good at home and abroad.⁸⁰

It remains then to assess these themes in the context of developing self-definition. When taken together, the analytical descriptions of Ryle, McGrath and Bebbington do present at least four constituent socio-theological vectors for our study, but for the purposes of this research 'activism' requires a greater scrutiny, building mission and congregation with focus on themes of leadership and story.

Evangelicals in worship have a focus on Jesus and his death on the cross, which Bebbington called 'crucicentrism' and McGrath describes as 'a focus, both devotionally and theologically on the person of Jesus Christ, especially his death on the cross' and Ryle self-describes, as a tenet of evangelicalism, 'the paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the nature of the salvation which he has wrought out for man.'⁸¹

Evangelical approaches to Scripture, though rich, varied and multifaceted nevertheless provide a theology and context for proclamation, interpretation, application and action which maintains the reverence and efficacy of Scripture. Bebbington calls this 'biblicism'; McGrath states: 'the identification of Scripture as the ultimate authority in matters of spirituality, doctrine and ethics'; and Ryle opines that evangelicalism can be distinguished from other forms of Protestant and Christian theology in the: 'absolute supremacy it assigns to Scripture, as the only rule of faith and practice, the only test of truth, the only judge of controversy'. Evangelicals affirm the necessity, desirability and expectation of personal transformation through a personal relationship with God through Christ. This begins through the doctrine of

⁸⁰ Stock, *Church Missionary Society*, p. 270.

⁸¹ McGrath, *Passion for Truth*, p. 22; McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London, 1995), pp. 49-88; J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied*, pp. 2-5; J. Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, pp. 27, 154; D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 3-19; J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem*, pp. 15-23.

the ‘new birth’ and continues through the tangible and effective exercise of sanctification through the work of the Spirit. Properly understood, these ought to be taken together. Bebbington calls this ‘conversionism’ and McGrath affirms that evangelicalism retains: ‘an emphasis upon conversion or ‘new birth’ as a life-changing religious experience’.⁸²

The fourth area is activism and the theology and practice of mission. Attempts to separate out the practice of evangelism from social activism and organisational entrepreneurialism are to be resisted. And though ‘mission’ may itself be difficult to define, and Bosch suggests that approximations suffice, to the nineteenth-century evangelical, mission activity always complemented evangelism and preaching.⁸³ Hence Eugene Stock in his introduction to the *History of the Church Missionary Society* conflates evangelistic and socially transforming work under the same heading of mission: ‘The varied methods in missions, evangelistic, pastoral, educational, literary, medical, industrial, all receive more or less notice in various parts of the work.’⁸⁴

Thus the fourth element of the Bebbington quadrilateral is ‘activism’. McGrath says evangelicalism is known by: ‘a concern for sharing the faith, especially through evangelism’. And here there can be some parting of the ways with the analysis of Bishop Ryle who brought attention as his fourth emphasis to: ‘the depth of prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption’. But even this is connected, because for evangelicals, evangelism, mission and activism are outworkings of their deeper theological, anthropological and soteriological understandings.⁸⁵

⁸² B. Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism. True religion in the Modern World* (Oxford, 2018). Evangelicalism was more endoskeleton than exoskeleton, and embraced a natural hybridity, p. 276.

⁸³ K. Ferdinando, ‘Mission: A Problem of Definition’, *Themelios*, 33 (1) (2008), pp. 46-59; D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 9, 275, and p. 409-420 for the differences between evangelism and mission.

⁸⁴ Stock, *Church Missionary Society*, p. xii.

⁸⁵ Contemporary continuities can be evidenced also in the statement of belief of the Evangelical Alliance of the UK [<http://www.eauk.org/connect/about-us/basis-of-faith.cfm>], in the USA [<http://www.nae.net/about-us/statement-of-faith>], in Australia [<https://www.afes.org.au/about/doctrinal-basis>], the World Evangelical Alliance, founded in London in 1846 and which today represents 129 different national Evangelical Alliances [<http://www.worlddea.org/whoweare/statementoffaith>] and the text of the Lausanne Covenant representing evangelicals in 150 nations in 1974 [<http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html>]. Accessed 11 March 2014.

As Stock explained:

The true idea of missions is not grasped unless we have eyes to see, on one hand, a human race needing a Saviour; on the other hand a Divine Saviour for all; and in between the two, the men who know Him, commissioned by Him to proclaim His message to all who know him not.⁸⁶

The thesis will observe six penetrating themes which recur and thus remain pertinent throughout the analysis of the historical data. The focus on the ministry of Thomas Gaster and upon the identification of a 'new parochialism' will demonstrate an Evangelical English Anglican parish enhanced with a missionary evangelicalism which applied the principles, motivations and methods of the foreign mission field and reapplied them to the 'sending' or 'home' nation. Thus, in effect the home parish, became the subject of a missionary movement in reverse, whilst retaining a unity of theology and purpose throughout. Thomas Gaster will be shown to exemplify a cogent and self-aware movement of like-minded leaders, activists and ordained clergy. Analytical vectors of word, worship, transformation, leadership, history and mission will act as a filter to the data, but they have been chosen as most pertinent for a contemporary assessment of historic missionary evangelical congregation and reinvention of the parish. As an exercise in applied theology the filter brings the defining features identified by theologians together with the insights of congregational studies, missiology and historical research. This will give a thick description of the conceptual and inhabited world of missionary evangelicalism in a church context, and will guard against a narrow reading or an unapplied approach. Some data will demand greater attention in one or more of these themes. The first four lend themselves obviously to the defining features often associated with evangelicalism, the last two have been deemed necessary by the demands of the data, and to enrich the understanding.

The biblicism of evangelicalism demands an exploration of the role of Scripture in the work of Gaster, including the theology and context of proclamation and teaching. Evangelicals esteem the high place of Scripture and the value of faithful exegesis and application. This theme will also investigate revelation, and the impact of doctrine on

⁸⁶ Stock, *Church Missionary Society*, p. xiii.

practise in the personal theology as well as the missionary practise of Gaster in India and in London. The underlying primary concerns of evangelicalism would always include the high place for Scripture, and despite the multiplicity of evangelical expressions, Harriet Harris concurs that: 'In their diversity they are in agreement that a 'high' view of the Bible is essential to their evangelical identity'.⁸⁷ McGrath opines:

Evangelicalism shows most clearly its theological and spiritual continuity with the Reformation, and its concern to ensure that the life and thought of the Christian community was grounded in, and continually re-evaluated in the light of, Scripture.⁸⁸

Although placing a high value on Scripture is found both in self-description and by detractors as a confirmed value, it does not at this stage differentiate between evangelicalism and fundamentalism. This discussion will be further explored within the historical section of the thesis, where it will be shown that the evangelical/fundamentalist distinctions are something of an anachronism when applied to the evangelical churchmanship, preaching and theology of Thomas Gaster and the work of the Church Society before 1900. In this earlier stage the common roots of both contemporary Christian evangelicalism and contemporary Christian fundamentalism are visible in emergent forms.

The worship life of Victorian evangelicals demonstrated a particular focus on Jesus and his work on the cross, and the role and activity of the Spirit in the life of the individual and congregation, and this will be explored in such a way that will also allow the research to give proper place to the role of buildings intended for providing a context for worship; to the status and culture of prayer meetings, liturgy and where possible to the role of sign systems and ritual within congregational life and thought. Worship in congregational life is also the locus of much conflict, either between congregations or internally, and the era under investigation is no exception. Thomas Gaster demonstrated a priority and emphasis on prayer and prayer meetings in his

⁸⁷ Harries, *Fundamentalism*, p. 313. See also Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*, pp. 74-89; P. Dubois, *Evangelicals and the Word of God* (Buxton, 1996), pp. 22ff; G. M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp. 4ff.

⁸⁸ McGrath, *Passion*, pp. 53, 117.

Indian ministry, which were non-denominational, but once back in London became increasingly involved in debates about worship, liturgy and how these ought to be resolved within the Church of England.

The theology and practice of mission will be explored, giving emphasis to the role of the individual and the wider church. This will examine the relationship between mission and congregation, the distinction of mission in relationship to the other functions of congregation, and the interplay of the missionary to other forms of calling. This research will suggest ways in which Thomas Gaster adopted and transformed mission methodologies from home to the Indian context, and ways in which he reapplied methods and principles learned in the cross-cultural phase of his ministry to the needs of his local London context in Camberwell, Clapham and Peckham.

What may be less clear was the extent to which Thomas Gaster was seeking the transformation of the individual, the betterment of society through the ministry of the congregation or in his own life and home. As Cox maintains:

The theory of the evangelical revival had always been a theory of social change. As each person in England was persuaded to accept genuine, rather than formal, Christianity, England would become a Christian nation.⁸⁹

Thus this theme will include both concepts of regeneration— an act of personal transformation, issues of holiness, and the impact on others through social action, education and other avenues of community transformation. The new parochialism retained this evangelical idea of regeneration and turned it into a replicable model that was both social and spiritual. It was primarily an evangelical enterprise within the Church of England and therefore the evangelical contributors within the Church of England, exercising leadership at a local level in the parish will be of primary importance. In the activism of Gaster is demonstrated this new parochialism, where

⁸⁹ J. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society, Lambeth 1870-1930* (Oxford, 1982), p. 55, 57. Cox argues for this strong binding of concepts (of evangelism and social change) and conversely that it was the delegation of social functions to local government that severed the link and when this was combined with a more liberal or post-missionary theology, which taken together became a chief reason for eventual decline of evangelical church attendance in nonconformist and Anglican forms, especially in Lambeth, pp. 265-276.

transformation is the result of specific actions on behalf of the parochial protagonist, the missionary individual, operating within the wider providence of God – local regeneration was entirely within the purview of the local church, and the new missionary paradigm of parish. McIlhiney, in his studies of East London parishes after and especially the ministry of Watts-Ditchfield in Bethnal Green, warns that too often those who examine nineteenth-century evangelicalism fail to discern from 1851 a new parochialism and do not give enough focus to this new evangelical party which was ‘one that tended to be just as incarnational in its theology, just as socially progressive, and just as distinguished by parochial service, as the broad church or the anglo-catholic movement,’ and was also distinct from evangelical parochial predecessors.⁹⁰

The primary data of this research is historical, finding in Thomas Gaster a missionary evangelical leader who could pioneer and develop a living congregation in a rapidly changing culture. The data will be presented as a detailed story demanding interpretation, and generating certain themes for discussion and analysis. As Hopewell reminds us: ‘I have begun to see how astonishingly thick and meaning-laden is the actual life of a single local church.’⁹¹ It ought to be possible to discover the values of missionary-minded churches in their history. We may also be able to perceive in the life of a church congregation a collective adherence or departure from foundational values, and it may be possible to trace the health of a church in its relationship to these earliest values. Missionary evangelicalism, and, in fact, all Christian thinking does not take place as a conceptual framework alone, and Hopewell has shown that ‘story’ can reveal much more about a whole congregation than other tools. Hopewell writes:

An emphasis on narrative is long overdue. Despite the narrative character of almost all congregational perceptions and talk, the temptation is to employ other, more solemnly theoretical modes of expression to explain the local church.⁹²

⁹⁰ McIlhiney, *Gentleman*, p. 93. Watts-Ditchfield considered himself a missionary within London and McIlhiney is insistent that a specific change to missionary parochialism, though having forebears in Champneys, did not emerge as a paradigm in East London until after 1851 and has been ‘unfairly forgotten’, pp. 73-93.

⁹¹ J. F. Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (Philadelphia, 1987), p. 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Missionary evangelicalism in every age has been affected by the role of leaders and leadership. With the specific example of Thomas Gaster, what kind of leadership is perceived, articulated and practised? Using the appreciation of qualitative data in congregational studies will allow the researcher to assess leadership styles and values alongside the effect on a congregation, and trace historic responses to spiritual leadership, authority, power, decision making, money and accountability. These are questions regularly examined within the multilayered disciplines of congregational studies. Congregational studies, sometimes using ethnographic tools, sometimes give attention to examining the leader of the church, especially their theology and practice, and role within the congregation. Ammerman, for example, interrogates the ‘power of the pastor’, and records the rituals of authority, preaching, sacrifice, evangelism and emotion within the life of a congregation.⁹³ Warner examined the theological and social models for the successive pastors of a Californian Presbyterian church, arguing that the role of the pastor changed, determined in part by their particular theology and place within the story of the congregation.⁹⁴ And while participant observer techniques of the sort employed by Warner are not possible for studies of historical distance, nevertheless, a clearer assessment of the founding missionary vicar of All Saints Peckham, will be achieved using insights from congregational studies designed to assess performative leadership in congregational contexts.

Ploughing in the Field of Congregational Studies

The implication of this thesis will answer a fundamental question about mission — how can a local congregation live out its missionary call in its context? Contextualising the study of Thomas Gaster and All Saints Church has been facilitated with insights from the emergent field of congregational studies, establishing methodologies for research, and weighing the suitability of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Research should also give answers to more specific questions — could All Saints Peckham be said to be a missionary congregation, and if so, what caused it to be started, and what organisational models were utilised?

⁹³ Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, pp. 120-133.

⁹⁴ R. S. Warner, *New Wine in Old Wineskins: Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church* (Oxford, 1988), p. 31, 63.

We have established that the study will make use of certain methodologies from within congregational studies, an academic discipline derived from employing ethnographic, narrative and anthropological tools to the study of contemporary congregations of faith, and one which makes interpretive use of qualitative data sources.⁹⁵ Several of the established tools for research analysis, such as participant observation and journal-writing with theological reflection are designed to allow immersion of the researcher whilst retaining a certain element of professional detachment or objectivity. The use of qualitative data in the historical study of congregations retains richness but has the necessary detachment granted through the passing of time, especially as the era under consideration focuses on the latter half of the nineteenth century. Using certain methods from congregational studies will allow this historical and theological study to take seriously the journals, architecture and symbolism of the congregation.

Congregational life is often poorly read and inaccurately interpreted by members and leaders, let alone by observers, which makes the historian's role even more challenging. Congregational studies developed tools designed to retain motifs and tendencies, elucidated by conversational motifs and symbolic themes to accurately record the dynamic life of a community and congregation. It was these tools of academic exploration, especially elements of the narrative approach of Hopewell,⁹⁶ which enabled the researcher to ask penetrating questions of membership and worship, of the relationship between leader and congregation, of the inconsistency between articulated and actualised theology in the life of a contemporary congregation which convinced me of their worth for historical study. Hopewell writes:

I have stressed the idiomatic nature of parish culture, its thick networking of construable signs to form a dialect of signals and symbols. The most important lesson I learned... is that most parish

⁹⁵ P. E. Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge, 1999); N. T. Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, 1987); H. Cameron *et al.* (eds.), *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook* (London, 2005); C. B. Scharen, *Public Worship and Public Work: Character and Commitment in Local Congregational Life* (Collegeville, 2004); J. Hendriks, *Studying Congregations in Africa* (Wellington, 2004); Warner, *New Wine*.

⁹⁶ Hopewell, *Congregation*, pp. 40-52.

idiom conveys and implies narrative. Story expresses the intricacy of congregational life.⁹⁷

Recently this approach has been encouraged by the Building on History Project, which states: ‘no two parishes are the same: each has its own unique story, context and culture,’⁹⁸ and by pastoral theology guides forming around narrative leadership styles such as those developed by the Alban Institute.⁹⁹

The historical and narrative importance of Thomas Gaster to the life of the leaders and members of the congregation of All Saints Peckham in the contemporary era underlined how historical continuities and discontinuities are constituent to present realities. The current author was appointed to the role of vicar of All Saints Peckham (Camberwell), having previously served a curacy in St Aldate’s Church in Oxford, and led the church for seven years. This role afforded me privileges of access to the site, the records and the collective memory of the congregation. There was also the added familiarity with the specific locality of the parish gave me detailed understandings of dynamics and neighbourhood development, a knowledge of the geography, and an understanding of the legal and vocational relationship between parish, priest and people. But there were no formal existing histories of the congregation or the church readily available. All Saints is mentioned within local history but these references are tangential, and nonconformist church life in the area is better documented.¹⁰⁰

There were many continuities between Thomas Gaster and the current author — who held the same role, walked the same physical spaces, had pastoral and missionary

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

⁹⁸ ‘If historical research is purposefully presented, it can inform decision making, contemporary debates and selfunderstanding’ in ‘*Engaging with the Past to Shape the Future; the Experience of Building on History: The Church in London*’ [http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/BOH_booklet_Final.pdf], pp. 6, 8-10.

⁹⁹ L. A. Goleman (ed.), *Teaching Our Story: Narrative Leadership and Pastoral Formation* (Alban Institute, 2010); L. A. Goleman (ed.), *Living Our Story: Narrative Leadership and Congregational Culture* (Alban Institute, 2010); L. A. Goleman (ed.), *Finding our Story: Narrative Leadership and Congregational Change* (Alban Institute, 2010); C. Swart, *Re-Authoring the World: The Narrative Lens and Practices for Organisations, Communities* (Knowres, 2013).

¹⁰⁰ Peckham local history is documented extensively in J. D. Beasley, *Peckham and Nunhead Churches* (London, 1995); *Building Together: The Story of Peckham Methodist Church: A Concise History of the Buildings Used by the Wesleyans and Methodists in Peckham* (London, 1985); *Peckham in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1973); *The Bitter Cry Heard and Heeded: The Story of The South London Mission of the Methodist Church 1889-1989* (London, 1990).

obligations to the inhabitants of the same streets, and worshipped in the same building with an Evangelical Anglican congregation. And yet the discontinuities were perhaps starker: Peckham was no longer a new Anglo-Saxon middle-class suburban community in a city at the heart of the Empire. Now it was an inner-city neighbourhood in the middle of a sprawling metropolis approaching ten million inhabitants, and the racial profile of the community was dramatically altered, having been home to high proportions of ethnic minorities for several decades. The parish is now also blighted by multiple indicators of deprivation, including violence and poverty. The modern era had also brought with it changes to transport networks, the introduction of the welfare state and social housing.¹⁰¹ Despite the initial similarities, these differences were arguably more fundamental.

Pastoral and ordained leadership is regularly under scrutiny in congregations within the discipline of congregational studies,¹⁰² though from a methodological point of view, there was little precedent for the researcher inhabiting both the role of observer and the main protagonist in organisational change through leadership.¹⁰³ Steele scrutinises the Emerging Church movement and missiology,¹⁰⁴ and Guest uses congregational studies to good effect to examine an Evangelical Anglican congregation of St Michael le Belfry, York,¹⁰⁵ and uses the approaches of Hopewell and Smith¹⁰⁶ to read the congregation and analyse its resistance and accommodation with modernity. The literature surrounding the field of congregational studies is varied, a little unstable and essentially multi-disciplinary; inhabiting sociology, ethnography, anthropology, management and organisational studies, pastoral care, applied theology,

¹⁰¹ [Key_Southwark_Housing_Data_January_2013_Final.pdf] (Southwark.gov.uk, February 2013) p. 13 puts the proportion of social housing in the borough of Southwark at between 54% and 43% between 2001 and 2012.

[<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s32592/Appendix%201%20Investing%20in%20Council%20Housing.pdf>]. Accessed 19 November 2013.

¹⁰² R. S. Warner, 'Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (5) (1993), pp. 1044-1093; R. Balmer, 'New Wine in Old Wineskins: Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church by R. Stephen Warner', *Church History*, 60 (1) (March 1991), pp. 141-142.

¹⁰³ P. Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology: The Gospel and the Church* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 170, 191-198

¹⁰⁴ H. Steele, *New World, New Church: the Theology of the emerging Church Movement* (London, 2017), pp. 109-148.

¹⁰⁵ M. Guest, *Evangelical Identity and Contemporary Culture: A Congregational Study in Innovation* (Milton Keynes, 2007); R. J. Laird and J. D. Garcia, *Sacred Space, Sacred Stories: An Appreciative Congregational History of Central Presbyterian Church of Summit, New Jersey* (New Jersey, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ C. Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago, 1998), p. 10.

missiology, church growth, and cultural studies.¹⁰⁷ Therefore any approach will necessarily be steered by the dominant disciplines and by the demands of the research question itself which is a story of church, leadership and parish, and which in this instance is historical, missiological and congregational, with a backdrop of wider themes of Empire and evangelicalism. Congregations are units of people, or communities in which shared value and meaning become deeper from within. They are collections of people in dynamic interaction with God and each other, and with their community and with the wider church. They cannot be understood properly in isolation from each or any of these four poles.

Some attempt has been made in bringing a certain structure to the field of contemporary study in the United Kingdom, especially by Cameron (2005) and Guest (2004).¹⁰⁸ *Studying Local Churches* is intent on being a handbook for policy makers that: ‘offers an intelligent non-confessional approach to studying the local church’¹⁰⁹ and is structured along four disciplines, namely anthropology, sociology, organisational studies, and theology. Frances Ward points out that theology is conspicuously different from the other three strands, and she argues that it fails to provide obvious methods of enquiry or a distinctive set of analytical tools. She therefore places congregational studies within the theological subsection of practical theology, arguing for interdisciplinary borrowing, as well as for praxis-led study with action-reflection.¹¹⁰ While this clearly fits the intent of the volume, it necessarily means that the approaches suggested in the book are skewed away from fairly representing the fields of church growth, ecclesiology, biblical studies, church history and missiology. In so doing, this neglect fails to adequately represent congregational studies material from these approaches, especially in the United States, where the confessional approach supplies a wealth of material, especially for pastors and church leaders in training.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ See Hopewell, *Congregation*, pp. 19-39.

¹⁰⁸ H. Cameron *et al.* (eds.), *Studying Local Churches*; Guest *et al.* (eds.), *Congregational Studies*.

Hopewell (1987) gives a robust survey up to the early 1980s, with special focus on congregational studies in the United States.

¹⁰⁹ Cameron, *Studying Local Churches*, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹¹ Such as L. S. Jung and M. A. Agria, *Rural Congregational Studies: A Guide for Good Shepherds* (Nashville, 1997).

The field is therefore better analysed within two broad categories of intrinsic and extrinsic studies, along the lines suggested by Guest, Tusting and Woodhead in *Congregational Studies in the UK*:

Extrinsic congregational studies are those whose study of a congregation or congregations has some broader good, such as a concern to assess the role of congregations in the generation of social capital, or a desire to enrich theological reflection with ‘congregational voices’. Intrinsic studies are those that study congregations for their own sake and for the sake of understanding them. Some intrinsic studies focus narrowly on a congregation or congregations alone, others focus more broadly on congregations in relation to their wider context. Obviously both these categories are ideal-types...¹¹²

Extrinsic studies would be communitarian, organisational, theological and would include church-growth analysis and church health analysis. A congregational study from this research environment may well stress church attendance and records and seek to compare them with wider statistical trends. Intrinsic studies are those which immerse themselves within the life of the congregation in order to study it, and therefore deploy different research methodologies, such as drawing up typologies or contextualisation. These studies could be self-contained or multifaceted. For instance, an immersive observant study would record leadership, liturgy, decision-making, narrative themes in free conversation and seek to compare them with the articulated theologies of the pulpit. The research techniques of participant observation and journal writing may be deployed.¹¹³

Guest, Tusting and Woodhead argue that the extrinsic, communitarian model has dominated the field on both sides of the Atlantic until the 1970s when a more intrinsic approach began to predominate in congregational studies as an academic arena. However, the emergent field can struggle for legitimacy, undermined on one side by the theological necessities of congregation, and on the other by the

¹¹² Guest *et al.* (eds.), *Congregational Studies*, p. 5.

¹¹³ Ibid.

philosophical and methodological constraints of ethnography, anthropology and sociology of religion. This means there is little shared language and understanding amongst scholars — models and methodologies vie for supremacy and legitimacy, as is common for applied theology. The environment of study also skews the field — congregations are studied by historians, missiologists, anthropologists, theologians, pastors and lay people, the theologically trained and the theologically ambivalent. Some personal fieldwork concerns are raised by those conducting immersive and intrinsic studies, but this is not a danger for historical analysis of a leader who is no longer living and amidst a congregation who are descendants of the first generation of All Saints, but have the advantage of distance to maintain analytical objectivity.¹¹⁴

Hopewell and Cox both attempt to avoid these confusions of subjective and objective analysis by declaring presuppositions and preferences while setting the philosophical context of study with brief autobiography and self-conscious writing style.¹¹⁵ In so doing, Cox is able to admit to previous mistakes in study, and his own development of thought, tracing the secularization theory from the 1960s to its demise before the evidence of a pervasively religious world, then beginning to write on the explosive growth of Pentecostal churches. Hopewell placed his analysis within mission studies, and used the stories told as visitors came to his own hospital bed. Essentially, Hopewell and Cox's methodology — unveiling the self as researcher with certain assumptions and perspectives — are vitally important approaches, for they produce a study that is at once confessional and in some ways non-confessional. The confessional element is self-revelatory — the author is a Christian theologian. Yet Cox is also aware of his own theological dissonance with the Pentecostal congregations he is researching, and the movement he is seeking to understand and explain. Cox's tone is designed to engage with Pentecostals and Pentecostalism for the sake of the theological and liberal elite of which he is a part. A similar stance and

¹¹⁴ An example of this confusion and anxiety can be seen in the personal fieldwork concerns of the sociologist R. Stephen Warner who on three occasions in his discussion of fieldwork stresses his fear of losing his analytical stance in *New Wine in Old Wineskins*, pp. 70-74.

¹¹⁵ e.g. Hopewell, *Congregation*, pp. 3-5, 40-42, 55-64; H. G. Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (London, 1996), pp. xv-xviii, 3-17. Others prefer to keep meagre personal details in an Appendix e.g. P. E. Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 238; Scharen, *Public Worship and Public Work*, pp. 229-234.

tone are adopted by Ammerman who expresses her aim as wanting to ‘explain the fundamentalists’, and in so doing makes it clear that this is not a study of fundamentalism from within, but extrinsic with high levels of immersion into an essentially peculiar culture.¹¹⁶

Using the filter of *Congregational Studies in the UK* allows this mapping of the field to embrace non-confessional research as well as confessional research, drawing on the insights of ethnographers as well as theologians and brings a greater richness to the study of historical congregations and leaders.¹¹⁷ Extrinsic studies include the overlapping fields of church growth, organisational studies, church health and applied theology. It must be said that the church growth movement as represented by McGavran and Wagner, and the accompanying research has probably had the biggest impact of all congregational study. It is teleologically motivated, and often written up in an accessible manner. The *telos* is the growth of the church; the underlying assumption is often that unless something is learnt then churches will continue to decline. In part the field is a response to the secularization thesis proposed by the sociologists of the 1960s, such as Cox, and predicates a conscious and specific rejection of the complexity of congregational studies itself in favour of simplicity and mission:

Considerations of anthropology, sociology, theology and organisational complexity pile up one on the other. Never was a clear mission theory more needed than today – a theory firmly rooted in biblical truth.¹¹⁸

Despite this, McGavran and Wagner do advocate the use of other disciplines, but wish to put these other disciplines in subjection to the biblical imperative of preaching and response, and of conversion, and to do so with a global, rather than a Western

¹¹⁶ Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ For an overview of the discipline see L. Woodhead, M. Guest *et al.* (eds.), ‘Congregational Studies: Taking Stock’ in *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Context* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 1-23; J. W. Carroll *et al.* (eds.), *Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Nashville, 1986); J. R. Nieman, ‘Congregational Studies’ in B. Miller-McLemore (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (Malden, 2012); J. Williams, ‘Congregational Studies as a Resource and a Critique for a Mission-Shaped Church’, *ANVIL*, 26 (3 and 4) (2009), pp. 243-253. [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/anvil/26-3_243.pdf]. Accessed 25 February 2014.

¹¹⁸ D. A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (3rd edition, 1990), p. xvi.

perspective.¹¹⁹ They are driven by a conviction that God wants the church to grow and that pastors, mission leaders and Christians should learn how to work towards this goal. Thus, by its own definition, church growth is a subsection of missiology and hard to distinguish from ecclesiology. The results of study for those in the church growth movement are intended to be read and applied by pastors and denominational leaders.

Many church growth specialists, whilst being examples of extrinsic studies, nevertheless favour a counter-hierarchical model, a research model which maintains the agency of individuals and congregations in growth or decline, and is less reliant on denominational or institutional agency. Within this field a variety of specific emphases can be discerned as the engine of growth, such as signs and wonders, or cell church or contemporary worship, or small groups.¹²⁰ In more recent studies the emergence of ‘mega-churches’ and ‘multi-site’ churches have breathed new vigour into this area of study.¹²¹

Organisational studies are those analyses of churches based on models from community studies and social administration. In these the church is seen as part of the public sector or voluntary sector, and studied alongside such business models. The

¹¹⁹ Ibid., for example McGavran makes use of statistics: pp. 79-87, 103 and anthropology: ‘The Christian then turns to anthropology with a good conscience to discover why certain churches have grown and others have not, and to devise customs, institutions and other configurations that will fill the voids created by rapid social change, in a manner acceptable to the society in question and consonant with the authority of the Bible’. p. 93, Bibliography, p. 295-310.

¹²⁰ D. Watson, *I Believe in Evangelism* (London, 1976); C. P. Wagner *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (Glendale, 1976); J. Wimber, *Power Healing* (London, 1986); M. Percy, ‘Signs, Wonders and Church Growth: the theme of power in contemporary Christian fundamentalism, with special reference to the works of John Wimber’ (PhD, King’s College London, 1993); E. Gibbs (1991). However, others debate whether church growth should be seen as part of missional thinking e.g. Van Rhee, ‘Reformist View’ in Gary McIntosh (ed.), *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement* (Grand Rapids, 2004); E. Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth* (London, 1985); E. Gibbs and I. Coffey, *Church Next* (Leicester, 2001); D. Holloway, *Ready Steady Grow: Principles for the Growth of the Church in Britain* (Eastbourne, 1989); McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*; R. Pointer (1984); C. A. Schwartz, ‘Natural Church Development Handbook’ (1999) [healthychurch.org.uk]; C. P. Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Eastbourne, 1987); E. L. Towns, *Ten of Today’s Most Innovative Churches: What They’re Doing, How They’re Doing It & How You Can Apply Their Ideas in Your Church* (Nashville, 1972); A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom* (London, 1988); Documents the early years of the restoration churches in the UK.

¹²¹ National Congregations Study is hosted at [www.soc.duke.edu/natcong] and M. Chaves and S. Anderson, ‘Continuity and Change in American Congregations: Introducing the Second Wave of the National Congregations Study’, *Sociology of Religion*, 69 (Winter 2008), pp. 415-440; M. Chaves *et al.*, ‘The National Congregations Study: Background, Methods, and Selected Results’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38 (4) (December 1999), pp. 458-476. Also see Warren Bird, ‘Multisite Church Scorecard: Faster Growth, More New Believers and Greater Lay Participation’ [http://leadnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2014_LN_Generis_Multisite_Church_Scorecard_Report_v2.pdf].

local church is a 'voluntary organisation' whose clients are either the members (where pastor is the provider) or the community to be reached or affected are the 'clients' and the church is the 'provider'.¹²² These studies are often driven less by the needs of church growth, than by the demands of raising funds from the public purse or the charitable sector, or by those in seeking to understand the ministry of the church in the community from a non-confessional stance. Bob Jackson also approaches the church from the standpoint of organisational studies, more particularly as an economist and churchman. His assessment of the value and progress of the Church of England, especially its organisational and economic structures, has contributed much to this field in recent years.¹²³ He is able to combine analysis of the larger units of diocese and denomination, with smaller case-study analysis of individual churches, but brings them together to build up a picture of the whole organisation of the church. His is, by contrast, a confessional approach.

As church growth was intended as a response to the stagnating complexity of the influence of sociologically and anthropologically driven congregational studies, so church health is a response and re-emphasis to the goal-driven emphasis of the church growth literature. Martyn Percy is especially critical of the managerialism and the church growth focus in the Church of England, and argues for a qualitative, more sacred, *telos*, and less of a focus on numbers.¹²⁴ Dudley, Carroll, Ammerman and Galindo are also proponents of this qualitative congregational approach.¹²⁵ Themes of study tend to include the lay/clergy dynamic, the use of power by pastors, the issues of conflict, and/or engagement with the community outside the church. Whereas church growth literature thrives on the contrast of growth and decline, analysis of 'sickness' usually predetermines the agenda of studies of church 'health'. Whilst Woodhead, Guest and Tusting draw attention to the lack of enthusiasm in the United Kingdom for this approach, they neglect to reflect upon the growing response

¹²² e.g. M. Harris, *Organizing God's Work: Challenges for Churches and Synagogues* (London, 1998).

¹²³ B. Jackson, *The Road to Growth: Towards a Thriving Church* (London, 2005); *Hope for the Church: Contemporary Strategies for Growth* (London, 2002); *London Diocese, A Capital Idea* (London, 2003).

¹²⁴ M. Percy, *Anglicanism: Confidence, Commitment and Communion* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 75-85, 199-208; M. Percy and I. Markham (eds.), *Why Liberal Churches are Growing* (London, 2006).

¹²⁵ I. Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Alban Institute, 2004); C. S. Dudley and N. T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing and Adapting in Changing Communities* (New York, 2002), pp. 1; Jackson W. Carroll, *Bridging Divided Worlds* (New York, 2002).

of church health from within pastoral theology in the United Kingdom.¹²⁶

Extrinsic and intrinsic congregational studies differ both in terms of scale and methodology. Small scale views from within are valued because a congregation is essentially a grouping of people. The very word ‘ecclesia’ for church belies this root, and in the end concerted and accurate study of any congregation or congregations will involve sustained interaction with individual congregation members if it is to provide anything valuable. Thus, certain filters upon experience and research are vital. Given that this is a historical study many intrinsic congregational studies research tools are no longer accessible.

One such filter is a ‘symbolist’ or ‘cultural’ approach to the congregation. For Hopewell, this fascination with the congregation for its own sake is motivated by the conviction that each congregation has its own story and narrative structure, a certain mythic identity and narrative rather than a necessarily historic one. At times his sense of congregation is almost to give personality to the corporate identity of the collection of people. Whilst his identification with the mythic motif (or genius) is unsatisfactory and arbitrary, the underlying thesis of the story of a congregation is powerfully and influentially communicated and demonstrated, as are the research methods that he articulates.¹²⁷ He writes:

Many churches fail to tell their story. They are paralyzed in prosaic self-description that follows depressingly predictable lines. They evaluate themselves by counting money, membership and programs. Denying or ignoring the complexity of relationships in the congregation, they persistently proclaim their cohesion as a family. They tabulate age, sex, race, and social class of their members. They even equate themselves with the property they occupy.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ I. Stackhouse, *The Gospel-Driven Church: Retrieving Classical Ministries for Contemporary Revivalism* (Bletchley, 2004) or C. P. De Young *et al.*, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford, 2003).

¹²⁷ Hopewell, *Congregation*, pp. 9, 29, 87-99, 140.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140

It is often through the research method of participant observation that the researcher can discern any difference between the articulated position of a certain congregation and the opinions of those in the pews. For the historian, 'participant observation' in this pure ethnographic sense is impossible, but history can attempt to enter into the world of the congregation through a sympathetic approach to data and story.¹²⁹ Several scholars choose 'types' to identify themes within denominations, streams or defined geography. Some denominational types are instructive; in the United Kingdom, these would include Andrew Walker's research on the New Churches, Nigel Scotland's overviews of sectarian religion and Bob Jackson's analysis of the Anglican Church. The weakness of denominational studies is possibly more pronounced in certain cultures or nations where there is a wide variance of theologies and practices within a denomination. What meaningfully can be said about the entire Anglican Church in the United Kingdom, whose complexity and variation possibly define her more than her similarities? Might it not be more useful to use models to identify streams, tendencies, and aspirations? As Becker comments:

Congregational models are, in effect, the constitutive rule for the formation of local religious cultures; they are legitimate bundles of core goals or tasks and the means of achieving them.¹³⁰

Thus, different scholars have developed several types and models to best respond to their congregational research. Where best demonstrated, these models attempt to accurately describe the bundles of goals and tasks whilst maintaining the legitimacy of these differences. Warner suggests two dominant theological types (liberal or evangelical) and two organisational (nascent and institutional).¹³¹ Roozen's four

¹²⁹ Ammerman, *Bible Believers*; Hopewell, *Congregation*; S. Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge, 2000); L. Francis, *Church Watch: Christianity in the Countryside* (London, 1996); M. Guest, 'Negotiating Community: An Ethnographic Study of an Evangelical Church' (PhD, Lancaster University, 2000); M. Percy, 'Adventure and Atrophy in a Charismatic Movement: Returning to the 'Toronto Blessing'', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 20 (1) (2005), pp. 71-90.

¹³⁰ Becker, *Congregations in Conflict*, p. 12, 15.

¹³¹ R. S. Warner, *New Wine*; R. S. Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: A Theological and Sociological Study* (Eugene, 2007); R. S. Warner, 'Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (5) (1993), pp. 1044-93.

orientations of the congregation's relationship to society and the wider community for their typological analysis of churches are also influential, namely the civic, the sanctuary, the activist and the evangelistic.¹³² Becker suggests four identities common to congregations. These really describe how the congregation would see themselves or describe themselves as a house of worship, a family, a community or a leader model. And, least convincingly, Hopewell develops typologies of the canonic, empiric, gnostic and charismatic. Whilst these types do explore different areas (motivation, theological approach, identity, aspiration, worldview) Becker rightly points out that conflict can arise from the clash of two types, or the movement of a congregation from one type into another. For example, if a church that thinks of itself as 'family' receives a leader who moves the church further into a community model, this may cause more friction than simpler identifiers such as size or style of liturgy.¹³³

When the researcher turns to All Saints Peckham, tracing the life of the congregation from Gaster to the spirituality of modern gangs, analysis of the existence of annual reports, parish magazines and news bulletins quickly and easily display the values of the leaders and congregation members in any given era. Church growth and organisational growth literature also help with a reading of the congregation over time, as the change in numbers affected self-understanding, confidence and morale.

History and Story: Some Methodological Considerations Concerning Gaster's Primary Sources

The data for transmission and analysis is in many ways unique, and has never before been subjected to study by any discipline. The recollections of Gaster, which were published in his lifetime, are crucial primary sources from which the biographical narrative is derived. They have been checked against other sources, genealogical references, wider records of the CMS and the Diocese, and bishop's visitation records and have been found to be technically reliable in almost every case. These primary sources have never been examined and theologically assessed outside the local and

¹³² David A. Roozen, William McKinney and Jackson W. Carroll, *Varieties of Religious Presence: Mission in Public Life* (New York, 1984).

¹³³ Becker, *Congregations in Conflict*, pp. 3, 69, 77.

oral history of the parish life of All Saints, and it has been remembered that they are primary sources, written by a Victorian clergyman with reporting (journals), self-defence (letters to CMS) or exhortation (*A Brief History*) in mind. At times, he enlivens his narrative with rhetoric, pathos and story, his opinions framing and sifting the data of life for a wider and usually sympathetic evangelical reader.

Though Thomas Gaster's letters and journals from the time of his missionary service in India to the London Committee of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) have been preserved in the vast archive of the Society, the specific entries of Thomas Gaster have not previously been considered to have merited close scrutiny or analysis. This has perhaps been because the archive is large, and Gaster's duration of service lasted only a few years, meaning that though his impact was felt in one or two defined communities the wider impact of his seasons in Agra and Simla seldom, if ever, appear in other accounts. Therefore, the researcher has transcribed certain key comments and paragraphs from the handwritten notes.

The collection of less formal data within the era of Gaster's ministry in Peckham required extensive reorganising. A large metal box behind the choir stalls of All Saints Church and stacks of disordered files littered around the church site and belfry have given up their treasures, and can now be accessed in part through online images. This has allowed a wide variety of informal, visual qualitative data to be accessed alongside the formalised self-articulation of the quantitative congregational data. This in turn, enables a 'thick' description of the culture and history of the congregation. The simple web-based collection of data also allows further study by the congregation members and other historians and lends itself to perpetual storage of images.

Any examination of his life within the purpose of this study needs not only to record his actions, personality and impact, but also to ask what made his leadership distinctive or new. In Thomas Gaster there will be a clear example of the CMS missionary model of local leadership, and as such some conclusions may be drawn concerning cultural and ideological imperialism on the mission field of India. As a missionary, did he make any effort to self-reflect and assess his own cultural assumptions, thereby contextualising his message or methods, or was he unwittingly exporting cultural or political imperialism alongside the kerygma? His divergence

and compliance with the missionary methodology and mindset of CMS during this era will be of importance as the parochial fusion is examined in the new parochialism.

On his return to England, the study will reveal what kind of social and religious landscape he began to work in, and it will be assessed whether the successful ministry at All Saints normal within Evangelical Anglicanism at the time, and to what extent the growth of All Saints fitted into more general themes of regional church growth and decline. Furthermore it will be shown that the close reading of this parish and pioneering leader will redress certain assumptions about parochialism and suggest a new parochialism which was inspired primarily by the interplay of foreign mission methods with emerging urbanism.

Of Thomas Gaster's own approach to history a little can also be said at this stage. Three groups of data are most readily available; his formal written history, his view of history evidenced in his preaching, and those more qualitative and visual forms of data. The journal experience of Gaster lends his style of formal history a more 'chronicling approach'. Cameron writes of the medieval chroniclers:

Chronicles were works written often as a continuous running commentary on the events known to the author. They were usually annalistic: that is, they listed events under the year of their occurrence without seeking to impose an analytical structure or thematic grouping. They were often local in nature: they dwelt on great events chiefly in so far as they had impact on the place where the chronicle was being compiled.¹³⁴

Gaster's tale bears several of these hallmarks — a strong local focus, a sense of running commentary without serious reorganisation of data for analysis, inclusion of events to which the author has personal experience and the annalistic approach. Chroniclers reveal much, often unintentionally, about the normal, the mundane and the unexceptional in their inclusion and omission of details. Gaster is a protagonist chronicler, whose regular annual addresses presented updates on the work to the

¹³⁴ Cameron, *Interpreting Christian History*, pp. 110-113.

congregation, many of which have been preserved in the annual reports and accounts. There are unexpected similarities to the monastic in frequent referencing of the names of locally known individuals and events whose importance is of little immediate relevance to those for whom the story of the congregation bears little interest. The chronicler of All Saints had a low view of human nature within the community of the faithful coupled with a strong concept of providence. Cameron considers that simultaneously high and low views of human nature are consistent in writing church history:

A church made up of human beings cannot expect its insights or its decisions always to transcend the limitations of its human members. In this predicament, the Church may reflect divine grace at work within it; but how much it reflects that grace may have little or nothing to do with how well that Church meets its own standards of performance. The same Church will reflect all the human sins in the field of religion...¹³⁵

Thus, congregational studies have brought excellent insights into congregational and organisational analysis, with special emphasis on the symbolic and narrative universe of the congregation, and its attachment to formal theologies and the dynamic of leadership. A greater attempt to understand the symbolic and theological framework of missionary evangelicals will be needed in historical assessment.

This thesis, with its singular focus on the congregational life of Gaster and All Saints will benefit the wider resulting understanding of the emergence of the new parochialism, and will bring an enhanced methodological reading of the parish in history. The historical study that follows will allow an immersion in the details of one ministry and be able to frame this within a wider context of the new missionary parochial paradigm. Gaster, as an example of a CMS missionary who served in India, and then planted a church in London is an ideal focus of study for a movement which was distinctive for its deployment of entrepreneurial leadership, localism, and the insights and of global mission practice, specifically through CMS.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 238. See also W. R. Shenk, *Henry Venn: Missionary Statesman* (Eugene, 1983), pp. 16, 29, 30. Venn suggested working from self-moderating principles of mission in parish and foreign field.

CHAPTER 1

An Exported Victorian: 1857-1862. Thomas Gaster: The English Evangelical Missionary in Indian Context

‘I have been fitted for independent action by God, and I am conscious that wherever I have been left to carry out a work in my own way God has blessed it in the most marked manner, owning all classes...’¹³⁷
(Gaster)

‘The Protestant missionary mood of the period was: pragmatic, purposeful, activist, impatient, self-confident, single-minded, triumphant.’¹³⁸

‘Rarely was the relationship between Christian missions and Empire so complex as in India.’¹³⁹

CMS was the missionary agency founded and supported by the English members of the Church of England. The new parochialism was a fusion of complex missionary leadership to the parish context, and thus the influence of this missionary agency was not limited to raising support and recruits from the parish for the foreign mission fields, but generated a distinctive approach to entrepreneurial leadership that would come to define mission practice in home mission and the context of the English parish. Thomas Gaster was an example of a missionary sent from an Evangelical parish, trained and commissioned by CMS as a missionary, someone with practical missionary experience in the context of India with CMS, and who later planted a new congregation which in turn also raised up and funded further missionaries with CMS, but also had embedded within its operating systems styles of

¹³⁷ T. J. Gaster, letter to London Committee, 1861 (ref. 16.3).

¹³⁸ D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York, 1991), p. 336.

¹³⁹ R. E. Frykenberg, ‘Christian Missions and the Raj’ in N. Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 107-131.

leadership, congregational life and mission that owed perhaps more to the paradigm of CMS than to denominational systems previously employed in the Church of England. The Church Missionary Society never flourished in splendid isolation. It was in many ways a product of the age, maintaining an operating system which was in keeping with connectionalism and the voluntary society. Hindmarsh suggests three elements of ecclesiastical experimentation, which marked out early Evangelicalism in the Hanoverian age. Evangelicalism was woven from narrative strands, with a renewed emphasis on personal testimony and the profession of faith as the primary qualification for membership of the body of Christ. The second ‘ecclesiastical experiment’ was the renewed focus on ‘ecclesiola in ecclesia’, a small cell of regenerate believers who reinvigorated the church without leaving it. The third element was an international connectionalism, triggered by the Moravian revival, but remaining at the heart of the evangelical social realities. Thus CMS was less of an invention, than an emanation, from all of these principles, a small group (the eclectics) gathered to consider the global connectionalism and mission, through fervent cells of prayer and scripture study.¹⁴⁰

Thomas Gaster's period of overseas missionary service, from commission in June 1857 until his return to London, spanned only a few years, half of which were spent in Agra from October 1857 and the second half of which was carried out in the hill station of Simla from 1860 to 1862. Though analysis of the themes will cover both eras, it must be stressed that Gaster developed his skills in language and methodology over the period. The missionary Evangelicalism to which Gaster belonged was a more pronounced expression of what commentators suggest is an essential part of the intersecting themes of evangelical Christianity – including conversionism. In evangelical expressions of mission, if Bebbington, Stott, Noll and McGrath are correct, one should expect to see an emphasis on conversion in the theology and practice of mission in any historical, cultural or contextual situation. This following section, drawn from the circumstances of Gaster's Indian period of ministry will explore the wider context of his practice and theology by placing this historical study alongside the agency which deployed him and the models of mission identified by Bosch.

¹⁴⁰ Hindmarsh, *Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 54-57. J. Pratt, *Notes of the Subjects Discussed at the Meetings of the Eclectics Societ. [1798, 1799]* (Calcutta, 1874), pp. 77-81.

Thomas Gaster was a missionary with the Church Missionary Society (CMS), possibly the most influential Anglican Missionary agencies in the second half of the nineteenth century, and certain aspects of his ministry were shaped by the standards and expectations of that agency, both in its London office, which recruited him, and from the local committee in Calcutta. Though the foundation of the CMS has been documented as an Anglican impulse to a growing missionary movement within Baptist and other circles, this thesis does not stand up to close scrutiny. CMS took its place beside the earlier Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which was founded in 1698 to support work in America, and which chiefly put its efforts into Bible distribution. It was joined in 1701 by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which was sending missionaries to India from 1820. Rather, certain Evangelical Anglicans responded to a growing missionary impulse, and from its inception it was more interested in the cause of mission and proclamation than the denominational allegiance of those that were sent.¹⁴¹

To begin with, however, the Anglican aspect was of those individuals and congregations who supported and sent funds for mission rather than the missionaries themselves. The first missionaries dispatched were actually Lutherans and not Anglicans at all and the founders did not expect the Church of England hierarchy to support the work financially. Henry Venn describes the attitude of the then Bishop of London:

What a striking thing it is that a Bishop of London [Beilby Porteus] is hardly able... to scrape a few hundred Pounds together for the missionary Plans in his hands among all the peoples of the Church

¹⁴¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 262-248. Andrew Porter, 'An Overview 1700- 1914', pp. 40-63, in Etherington, *Missions and Empire*, p. 6, 47; Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, pp. 41, 231-237; B. Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 1-20; A. Porter, 'Review of B. Stanley *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 57 (1), In Honour of J. E. Wansbrough (1994), pp. 249-250; E. Elbourne, 'The Foundation of the Church Missionary Society: The Anglican Missionary Impulse' in J. Walsh *et al.* (eds.), *The Church of England, c.1689-c.1833* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 247-264; C. Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the End of A.D. 1814* (London, 1896), pp. 48, 51; B. Tennant, *Pulpit Preaching and the Church of England Missionary Societies, 1760-1870* (Oxford, 2013) pp. 240- 247; G. Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, 1988). 'Alongside the churches and their full-time ministries, Victorian religious life also produced and sustained a rich and at times, bewildering diversity of voluntary societies and agencies.' p. 6.

Establishment & that £10,000 should be raised in such a few days by the Irregulars who are also so much poorer a Class of people than the others.¹⁴²

The founding statements declare that: 'Of all the blessings which God bestowed upon mankind, the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the greatest. It is the sovereign remedy for all the evils of life, and the source of the most substantial and durable benefits.'¹⁴³

How would one describe the missionary theology of the CMS? The Missionary Society began with a strong conviction that evangelism was the duty of every Christian: to 'propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathens.'¹⁴⁴ The developing society generated several intentional distinctives: close links were encouraged between the sent and the sending. The missionaries and their home churches were expected to maintain strong personal, prayerful and financial links. The principle of personal initiative would include a strong element of self-directed entrepreneurialism on behalf of the missionary. The practical gulf of transport and distance meant that only a certain type of person who could operate comfortably within this delegated authority structure could be an appropriate candidate. Though mission belonged to every Christian, it was believed that God might equip certain persons with a 'specialisation of function' as the 'Holy Spirit gives opportunity' for a particular piece of service. In essence, this meant that there was a role for a missionary which was peculiar, and distinguished him (and in later years, her) towards a distinct vocation amongst other believers, who nevertheless shared the greater sense of gospel duty. The Church Missionary Society was never a grant-making body, but rather was based on assessing, approving and supporting individuals to their task, rather than simply seeking to fill posts. The organisation was

¹⁴² Elbourne, 'Foundation of the Church Missionary Society', p. 247. Though CMS were sometimes disappointed, they were not opposed to patronage from Bishops and Bishops such as Samuel Wilberforce and Daniel Wilson did support the CMS in later days but not exclusively. See Tennant, *Corporate Holiness*, on the difficulties of reconciling voluntarism with Ecclesiastical authority. pp. 117-242.

¹⁴³ *Church Missionary Society: A Manual for Outlining Its History, Organisation and Commitments* (London, 1961), p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Church Missionary Society: Founding statement* (1799), Resolution 1.

truly ecumenical from the beginning of its life.¹⁴⁵ Carey of the BMS was to comment that the unity across the societies in India, which included the CMS, was genuine: ‘As the shadow of bigotry is not known among us, we take sweet counsel together in the House of God as friends.’¹⁴⁶ The Society rules (Law XX) read: ‘A friendly intercourse shall be maintained with other Protestant Societies engaged in the same benevolent design of propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ.’

CMS as a mission maintained a strong emphasis on transformation, seeking a change in the life of individuals and the society to which they were ministering. The Indian mission simultaneously developed strands of work that maintained a strong interest in the general wellbeing and improvement of the person alongside their spiritual benefit, and looked towards the more permanent goal of removing the responsibility and leadership from the shoulders of the missionaries and laying this mantle on the indigenous churches. As Cash writes:

These strands: literature, Bible translation, co-operation, education, village vernacular schools, evangelism, not to mention others, were being woven together into one fabric of the church of God. No one supposed then that the foreign mission was a permanent element in the work. The objective in every arm was the building up of an indigenous church. That was to be the crown and the glory of every effort, and when it was attained the missionary would hand over the entire responsibility to the nationals of the country and to go forth to another unreached area awaiting evangelisation.¹⁴⁷

Henry Venn’s famous three-self maxim was developed in response to an 1838 revival in the Bengal village area of Krishnagar. Alexander Duff, a missionary who entered India at 21, became convinced that the missionaries had to reach all sectors of society, the higher Brahman castes, as well as the lower castes who seemed more receptive to the gospel. The Bishop of Calcutta visited the revival area where 500 men had asked

¹⁴⁵ *Church Missionary Society Manual*, p. 10-13, 36, 37.

¹⁴⁶ W. W. Cash, *The Missionary Church: A Study in the Contribution of Modern Missions to Oecumenical Christianity* (London, 1939), p. 46.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

for baptism, and where the movement had spread until the entire populations of 55 villages were meeting together for further instruction and discipleship. He wrote back to England saying: ‘the Holy Spirit was at work and who should set the limits to the power of His Grace?’¹⁴⁸ When Henry Venn took over as Secretary to the CMS in 1841 he investigated this recent revival, and the reasons why it had dissipated so quickly and failed to establish vibrant churches in its wake. With experience of running the evangelical parish of St John’s Upper Holloway, in London, he was convinced of the importance of local churches and the voluntary model, and clearly established that the goal to which CMS missionaries were working was: ‘self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending churches’.¹⁴⁹ These were really statements governing leadership rather than theology, generated from organisational, missionary reflection on a specific local response of leadership to congregational considerations. The missionary movement itself was required to shift from the pioneering to the sustainable, and from the nascent to the institutional.¹⁵⁰ Following these new emphases, the CMS work in India grew considerably, and by 1899 CMS had 406 missionaries, ran projects in 12 of the 13 Dioceses, looked after 1253 colleges and schools and had 3018 Indian workers, of which 160 were pastors. The clear social and organisational signifiers, as generated by the analysis of Stephen Warner in congregational studies, and which map the expected changes from social movement to social institution are observable in CMS as a whole from the 1840’s when Venn assumed secretarial leadership and also soon after in the English parochial counterparts.¹⁵¹

The two areas of mission field and the English parish were mutually self-correcting and self-informing and shared a pervasive icon of the ideal English parish, which

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴⁹ Shenk, *Henry Venn*, p. 20, explores Venn’s own rejection of episcopal control, whilst believing in episcopal accountability, and the principles of John Venn as having a successful mission fired by four undergirding principles, including a dependency on the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the quality of persons sent out, that missions must start small and grow from the ground up, and that they should be founded upon evangelical understandings of the Church and not High Church.

¹⁵⁰ Warner, *New Wine*, pp. 35-37, describes the nascent and the institutional.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 166, 167. ‘An institution is consensually recognized, relatively stable set of social roles and norms that takes its place among other institutions in the society and harnesses the commitment of participants even as it tends to last longer than the involvement of any one of them. A social movement, by contrast, is much more dependent on the intense commitment of its individual constituents... A movement does not usually have a recognized, legitimate place in the society, and its social function is to produce change, sometimes radical change, rather than to reproduce the status quo.’

became more explicit as the century progressed. The English parish was a symbol-rich ideal for those serving in India, and few missionaries were intending to demolish the parish as a sign-system, least of all those who were originally members of the Church of England and now members of the CMS. The English parish ideal did much to inform the methodology of the deployed missionaries, especially following the appointment of a Bishop in Calcutta which allowed convergence to begin structurally with some geographic episcopacy, not just conceptually.¹⁵² Liturgically, the Book of Common prayer was quickly translated into the vernacular by missionaries, especially those from SPCK, which reinforced the cultural link.¹⁵³ Within a few years the tendency of missionaries to see the missionary district as a parish became more pronounced, with one missionary manual making the analogy over twenty times, in a manner almost entirely uncritical of the English parish, esteeming ‘pleasant connections associated’ with the idea of a parish, and suggesting that ‘steady, permanent, useful work of all kinds, seems to belong by right to the term ‘parish’’.¹⁵⁴ New missionaries are advised to attend to a new district like a new curate arriving in a parish, and more established missionaries to consider the entire district like a ‘tract of country’ in a rural English parish, and equally in need of spiritual and physical regeneration: ‘Let the missionaries regard the whole district as their parish, the tent as their moving parsonage, each village and hamlet as if it were the house of a parishioner.’¹⁵⁵

The mental and cultural connection of parish for foreign mission is often neglected, but the written links become most pronounced after 1870 when the model of parish in England has itself been the recipient of the missionary methodologies of the activist energy of new parochialism.¹⁵⁶ Though the home parishes were the intended support base for the global missions project, there were other benefits of importing mission to

¹⁵² Smith says of the social vision of the Hanoverian parish that ‘it is difficult to imagine a system of theology and religious practice that could have provided a better fit or a better support for the ‘little commonwealth’ of the English parish than one that warned men and women that perseverance in ordinary holiness and good neighbourliness was a condition of salvation and assured them that it was attainable.’ p. 100, in M. Smith, ‘The Hanoverian Parish: Towards a new Agenda’, *Past and Present*, 216 (1) (2012), pp.79-105. Also M.Goldie, ‘Voluntary Anglicans’, *Historical Journal*, 46 (4) (2003), pp. 977-90.

¹⁵³ See W. Muss-Arnolt, *The Book of Common Prayer among the Nations of the World, a history of Translations of the Prayer Book of the Church of England and of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America* (London, 1914); and on the contribution of Henry Martyn in A.G. Pouncy, ‘Henry Martyn’, *Great Churchmen*, 9 (London, 1949).

¹⁵⁴ J. Murdoch, *The Indian Missionary Manual; or Hints to young Missionaries in India* (London, 1870), pp. 134-138.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁵⁶ Church Missionary Atlas, CMS (London, 1879), p. 5, 6.

the parish, many of which will be explored in the specific instance of All Saints Peckham, and the leadership of Gaster in that context.

The Commissioning Service of the Gasters with Church Missionary Society

Missionaries were clearly commissioned after training. On 5 June 1857, The London Committee of the Church Missionary Society met at the Church Missionary Children's Home in Highbury for the commissioning service of the outgoing group of 16 missionaries being commissioned to begin service around the world, including Mr and Mrs Gaster to Agra, India.¹⁵⁷ The committee and missionaries heard from the Principal of the Highbury training college, Rev. C. F. Childe, and the sermon was delivered by Bishop David Anderson of Rupert's Land (a territory mostly managed by the Hudson Bay Company until 1870, now mostly incorporated into Canada). The missionary bishop was in London for a brief season, when he also delivered a providentialist sermon at St Paul's Cathedral.¹⁵⁸ It was his first visit home after seven specific group. The lengthy commission sermon to the missionaries is perhaps a better reflection of the true motivations of those missionary bishops who oversaw and encouraged the work of the Church Missionary Society, and of the expectations of

¹⁵⁷ *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, July 1857, p. 154.

¹⁵⁸ D. Anderson, *Britain's Answer to the Nations: A Missionary Sermon Sunday*, 3 May 1857 (London, 1857): 'The tide of revolution sweeps over other lands, but is rolled back from this one. Her foes are many and powerful, but they all feel that there is a mightier arm than that of man arrayed on her side. She prevails far and near through the terror of her arms; but she has other victories - her peaceful conquests that she carries to the ends of the earth, the triumphs of the Gospel of Christ. It is not that we identify the land with Zion, or confine the term to our own Church or country; rather is it because of her connexion with Zion that God blesses the land, because in her the Zion of God is planted and cherished, by her the borders of Zion are enlarged and extended; and while she remains thus favourable and gracious to Zion, God will make her a praise and a glory in the earth'. See also M. P. Wilkinson, 'The Episcopate of the Right Reverend David Anderson, D. D., First Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land, 1849-1864' (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1950); A. A. Den Otter, "'The Wilderness Will Rejoice and Blossom Like the Crocus': Bishop David Anderson's Perceptions of Wilderness and Civilization in Rupert's Land Historical Papers', *Canadian Society of Church History* (2001); F. Peake, 'David Anderson: The First Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land', *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, 24 (April 1982), pp. 3-11; See also assorted correspondence: 'Bishop of Rupert's Land to Venn' (letter, 22 August 1849); Anderson to Committee of CMS (letter, 29 August 1849); and 'Bishop of Rupert's Land to Venn' (22 November 1849), Church Missionary Society Papers, University of Birmingham. R. Coutts, 'Anglican Missionaries as Agents of Acculturation: The Church Missionary Society at St Andrew's, Red River, 1830-1870' in B. Ferguson (ed.), *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970* (Regina, 1991). Coutts is highly critical of Anderson and the CMS mission as aggressive cultural imperialists, but fails to make a cogent distinction between challenging of culture, which may be cultural imperialism, and challenging of worldview which is theologically necessary for evangelism in missions work, p. 51. J. C. Scott, 'Review of *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*', *Great Plains Quarterly*, 14 (1) (Winter 1994). Also A. A. Den Otter, *Civilizing the Wilderness: Culture and Nature in Pre-Federation Canada and Rupert's Land* (University of Alberta Press: Edmonton, 2012). Also J. Brooke, 'Providentialist Nationalism and Juvenile Mission Literature, 1840-1870' SOAS, Henry Martyn Seminar, 2 February 2006 at Westminster College, Cambridge.

spiritual and theological motivation and missionary methods that governed the normal life of the evangelical missionary. First, it can be seen that a ‘missionary calling’ was seen as a specific spiritual gift and distinct vocation which called out the military imagery of the Scriptures and applied it to ministry. The commissioning service within CMS was a highly evangelical event, greater in importance and authorisation to an ordination, and the missionary service alongside deployment served as the moment of impartation. Much of the sermon is framed in the symbolic world of the soldier preparing for deployment overseas. For Anderson, the geographic and cultural distance of the foreign missionary is still dominant:

The Committee meet you as those whom they regard as inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit to serve God in the work of missions. Without such a conviction on their part, how could they venture to send you forth? Their hope and expectation that you will prove good soldiers of Jesus Christ, not turning back in the day of battle, but enduring hardness, and continuing faithful unto death... you have surrendered yourselves to Him, that you may be His unreservedly in spirit, soul and body, to live or to die, to do or suffer, according to His good purpose concerning you.¹⁵⁹

Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen evidences in the missionary sermons from 1851 a fusion of providentialist and evangelical tones, but a singular unifying and motivational thrust to make the gospel known, which should not be underestimated.¹⁶⁰ Surveying the sermons specifically focussing on India it can be seen that the sense of commission so evidently in the minds of designated missionaries, was to the evangelical a commission common to all Christians, and this is discernable in those by C. Spurgeon and E. J. Boyce, preached in London following the Indian Mutiny and infused with the cry to refocus spiritual and imperial energy on India, as well as in those by G. E. L. Cotton, Bishop of Calcutta in several years following. The Empire

¹⁵⁹ D. Anderson sermon, 5 June 1857, *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, July 1857, pp. 154-160. B. Tennant, *Corporate Holiness: Pulpit Preaching and the Church of England Missionary Societies, 1760–1870* (Oxford, 2013) in which Tennant clearly shows that the imagery of military heroism was also evidenced in other missionary sermons.

¹⁶⁰ Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen, ‘Go ye Therefore and Teach All Nations. Evangelical and Mission Sermons: The Imperial Period,’ in K.A. Francis and W. Gibson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 548-562.

itself, to the extent that it was governed by Christians, should also seek to advance the Christian gospel, not just to be a civilising power.

Anderson's sermon, or the edited version of it that we possess, was distinctive in that it was not designed to elicit financial support, and was more motivational and instructional. A highly practical set of priorities was to be expected in pursuit of the primary goal of 'winning souls to Christ'. The missionaries should 'master' the vernacular language, for people needed to hear of God in their own language:

This difficulty lies at the threshold of your work: you must overcome it if you would enter into the door of your usefulness...no missionary will rest satisfied with his interpreter as his mouthpiece. Until he can personally communicate with his people, he will feel himself as dumb in their presence, and he will pray and labour that he may have utterance.

Like the ecumenical exhortations that Cotton had given to the parish in Calcutta, Anderson suggested, urged that missionaries must evidence in their lives and conversation the 'truths which you teach and preach'. Sanctification, as a doctrine, needed to be demonstrable not just in the individual missionary but their family. Furthermore, there should be unity in the mission teams. The sermon is clearly drawing on the evidence of experience, warning:

It is not on great and vital questions that differences usually arise among fellow workers, but on the minor details of missionary labour and arrangement – on points that connect with domestic life, and that arise through infirmities of temper. Suspicions, distrusts, jealousies are allowed to creep in.

The last practical hint was concerning the importance of regular and weekly prayer together. These prayer meetings were part of CMS policy, described as: 'to communicate reciprocally their conflict, experiences, and failures, with a candid confession of those things which burden their consciences.'¹⁶¹ And with these words

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 159.

ringing in their ears, and with prayers from other members of the London Committee and the lecturers from the Islington training college, Thomas and Selina Gaster set sail for Agra.

The sermon was in some ways unexceptional, but it served to rearticulate the principles of operation, stir the hearts of the senders and the sent, as well as providing a theological and motivational backdrop to the mission task. As Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen points out, within British missionary sermons common themes were drawn on to emphasise exactly the topics we see covered and applied in this sermon by Bishop Anderson. The audience for the sermons were not reserved to those being commissioned, for they were published and circulated widely, and the occasions and subject matter were held in common, irrespective of theological flavour. The Broad Church Rev. Cotton in India, the fervent evangelical leader Spurgeon, Broomhall of the CMS and the Nigerian Samuel Crowther all reached a point of unity in the missionary sermon.¹⁶² As Bremner observes:

To be sure, there were tension and debate between High and Low factions within the church as how best to extend and consolidate the influence of Anglicanism worldwide, but the ultimate aim of transplanting the ‘true faith’ was shared by all.¹⁶³

Especially to evangelicals, a response to the Word was maintained as of primary importance for both the missionary-minded congregation and the touchstone of the mission activity itself. And although Imperial power had been much rocked by incidents like the Indian Mutiny, the response of English missionaries to India was fired up with military image but committed to a spiritual battle: ‘For the most part, the travelling vessels of the Word of God tried to accomplish their aim without the use of force.’¹⁶⁴

The martial imagery and the high levels of confidence evidenced in these missionary commission sermons continued unabated until the early days of the twentieth century.

¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 548-562.

¹⁶³ G. A. Bremner, *Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, c.1840-70* (Farnham, 2013), p. 366.

¹⁶⁴ Sheetz-Nguyen, *Go ye therefore*, p. 561.

J.R Mott, as late as 1900, added that the age was one of ‘unparalleled opportunity, where Providence and revelation combine to call the church afresh to go in and take possession of the world for Christ.’ Bosch argues that Mission was still motivated by martial imagery.

‘Missionaries were referred to as ‘soldiers’, as Christian ‘forces’. References were made to ‘missionary forces’ and tactical plans. Military metaphors such as ‘army’, ‘crusade’, ‘council of war’, ‘conquest’, ‘advance’, ‘resources’, and ‘marching orders’ abounded.’¹⁶⁵

Though Price is correct in locating the missionary impetus in a response to the preached word,¹⁶⁶ he is wrong to assert that this impetus was overshadowed by the cultural monolith of civilisation after 1850, either in South Africa or elsewhere. The common thread of missionary impetus, evidenced through the missionary sermons, was framed in terms of the spreading of Christian and scriptural knowledge and salvation.¹⁶⁷ There is nothing to indicate that CMS had changed its motivation, operating procedure or intentions, even after the instability of the Indian mutiny of 1857, though there is evidence that they redoubled their efforts to spread the gospel through proclamation, the sending out of missionaries and the priority of language study to preach in the mother tongue of the intended hearers without requiring a cultural leap upon conversion.

Thomas and his wife began their Indian ministry in Agra, and wrote regularly to the CMS Committee in London, including letters and regular missionary journals, most of which are retained in the CMS archive.¹⁶⁸ It seems even at the time of writing Gaster

¹⁶⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 338. Also the ‘heroic’ nature of this rhetoric is evidenced in Tenant, *Corporate Holiness*, p. 100.

¹⁶⁶ R. Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 23: ‘the world of the saved Christian could be open to all who experienced personal conversion and acceptance of the word of God’.

¹⁶⁷ R. Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c.1700-1850* (Oxford, 2007), references the genuine concern of high churchmen for mission from the eighteenth century onwards, defined as evangelism of non-Christians, pp. 11-15.

¹⁶⁸ CMS archive, 1857-1862. Reel 135, Section VI, art 6. See also Kaj van Vliet, *The Value of Mission Archives* in Huub Lems (ed.), *Mission History Mission Archives*, p. 12-14 who makes it clear that though much can be gained in terms of understanding the organisational culture of mission organisations, the overall impression from the bulk of personal files is of the nature of the actual work undertaken on the field.

was intensely aware of his readers, and the importance of being honest and faithful, as well as communicating useful observations and recordings of his ministry, trials and hopes.¹⁶⁹ Though these letters and journals have been kept in the archive, to date they have never been formally analysed, and no research published based upon their analysis. The reports from missions would have been crucial for the Gaster family, not just as a means of accountability but also for ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of the work, for the mission needed prayer and funds.¹⁷⁰

We therefore retain a picture of the Agra years which combines the necessities of official business and the missionary journals to give as full a sense as can be hoped for of the practices, theology and personal trials of a CMS missionary in India. The first journal sends back a six-month report of 1 July 1857 to 31 December 1857, which was first read by the London Committee in February of the following year, and covers the time he spent in Calcutta (Kolkata) and Agurparah (Agarpara). Thomas mentions in the note accompanying the first journal that he has already filtered out and carefully selected elements of the previous six months: 'I have not sent a continuous journal, but have rather thrown the stress upon those incidents which I thought might possess a common missionary interest.'¹⁷¹

Though this journal writing was a common missionary practice, and a form of accountability to donors and supporters, due to the several months' round trip for correspondence, it was by necessity that even establishment missionaries were to be granted a certain amount of autonomy given these communication limitations. CMS was part of the Anglican Church, and the Indian missionaries worked in the Indian Diocese of Calcutta in which they were based. Most were ordained members of the established church and yet their day to day ministry was observed through regular contact with their localised committee, again in Calcutta. They received a modest stipend, depending on what role they held, but were significantly less well paid than

¹⁶⁹ He is willing to recount failure as well as success. e.g.: 'Our mission in Agra is not as flourishing as it might be' (T. J. Gaster, letter, 5 October 1860).

¹⁷⁰ D. Jeyraj, 'Mission Reports from South India and Their Impact on the Western Mind: The Tranquebar Mission of the Eighteenth Century' in D. L. Robert (ed.), *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (Grand Rapids, 2008), pp. 21-42; Mission reports from South India, notably the Tranquebar mission did much to shape future mission praxis and laid down a model style for reports as well as for activities on the field. A. Lehmann, 'Prioritäten und Fernwirkungen der tranquebarmission,' *Evangelische Missionszeitschrift* (1956), pp. 37-51.

¹⁷¹ Gaster to London Committee. Note enclosing journal: 1 July 1857 – 31 December 1857 (Read February 1858).

colonial chaplains, and most missionary posts were reliant on links with individual congregations in England to support their work in prayer and financially.

There were inevitable ecclesiastical tensions between the missionary clergy and chaplains, given these overlapping spheres of influence in the similar physical territory and the parallel lines of communication and accountability back to England. Moreover, CMS were committed to the principles of a free and native church from which a missionary was to exert ever-decreasing influence, and this often ran counter to the authoritarian instincts of the Crown Bishops.¹⁷² Within the CMS, London appointed and selected the missionaries, who were then deployed by the Calcutta Committee along with catechists and other lay agents employed by the mission. This was true even in distant areas of North India. Hence, following famines in 1837 and 1838, relief work and orphanages were started in Sekundra and Agra.¹⁷³ The Agra which confronted the Gasters had a well-established mission station and a rich missionary history, having been the home for some time for Abdul Massih (Abdool Meseeh), an influential Indian convert from Islam. He was led to Christ under the ministry of Henry Martyn, baptised in 1811, engaged as a catechist by the Rev. Daniel Corrie, Archdeacon of Calcutta, and the Chaplain at Agra, as early as 1812, and then ordained a few years later.¹⁷⁴ The CMS had established a mission church early on and in 1850 had founded St John's College for the education of boys from Agra from all religious backgrounds, through the Oxford-educated Rev. Thomas Valpy French. French was exceptionally intellectually and linguistically gifted, and won the respect of many in government and military. He worked closely with James Thomason, government overseer of the Province, and an enthusiastic supporter of the mission, even preaching at his funeral in Agra in 1853.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² C. P. Williams, 'The Church Missionary Society and the Indigenous Church' in D. L. Robert (ed.), *Converting Colonialism*, pp. 94-97.

¹⁷³ Rosemary Keen, 'Editorial Introduction and Guide to the Archive', CMS Archive, *Church Missionary Society Manual*, pp. 8, 9, 10, 36, 37.

¹⁷⁴ D. Corrie, Biography (July 1813) and Obituary (1827), Abdul Massih, Missionary Papers 62 Midsummer 1831 (London, 1831), CMS. On Abdul Massih see also Graham King, *Abdul Massih: Icon of Indian Indigeneity* and A. A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (London, 1993), p. 111.

¹⁷⁵ Rev. T. V. French was the renowned linguist, and principal from 1850 until 1859, and then later Bishop of Lahore. R. Williams lecture 4 May 2007 [<http://webarchive.cms-uk.org/news/2007/williams-lauds-cms-hero-04052007.html>]. Accessed 31 July 2013. Vivienne Stacey, *Thomas Valpy French, 'First Bishop of Lahore'* (Rawalpindi, 1993); H. A. Birks, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Valpy French, First Bishop of Lahore*, 2 Vols. (London, 1895); E. Stock, *An Heroic Bishop: The Life-Story of French of Lahore* (London, 1913), especially chapter 2

The Agra community into which the Gasters were introduced had an existing missionary work, but was also caught up in the turbulence surrounding the Indian mutiny and thus quickly in the eye of an international storm. 500 British forces faced 5000 attacking the city and were quickly routed. Casualties were very high, though reports were that most of those from the missionary circle did not take up arms and they gave their own account of the events from a missionary perspective in missionary magazines. Thomas Gaster's description of arriving in Agra was printed in the *Gleaner* at the same time as an eye witness report from Agra during the uprising, alongside an image which had been prepared for publication:

Sunday, May 10th, 1857, was a quiet day at Agra; but the next morning a slip of paper placed on the table of the officials, made them aware of the mutiny at Mi'rut on that very Sunday; and on Wednesday, the 18th, reports were received of the atrocities at Delhi, and the probable march of the mutineers on Agra.¹⁷⁶

Gaster, perhaps idealistically, contrasted the virtuous missionaries and students at the missionary schools with the mutineers, and strongly identified the forces for independence as 'enemies', and initially conflated the Christian cause with that of the Government:

Outside the Church Missionary College, all alarm, hurry and confusion. Within, calmly sat the good Missionary the Rev. T. V. French, hundreds of young natives at his feet, hanging on the lips which taught them the simple lessons of the Bible: and so it was throughout the revolt. Native functionaries, highly salaried, largely trusted, deserted and joined our enemies, but students of the Government, and still more,

on his work in Agra; Also T. V. French, 'A sermon preached in St. Paul's church, Agra, on occasion of the death of ... James Thomason' (Agra, 2 October 1853). Also I. Cave Brown, 'The Venerable Archdeacon Pratt, Archdeacon of Calcutta: A Sketch' in *Mission Life*, Volume III, Part 1 (1872), p. 163-169.

¹⁷⁶ 'Agra During the Indian Mutiny', *The Church Missionary Gleaner* (February 1859) (London, 1859), p. 14. R. C. Clark, *A Brief Account of Thirty Years of Missionary Work of the Church Missionary Society in the Punjab and Sindh, 1852 to 1882* (Lahore, 1883).

the Missionary schools, kept steadily at their classes; and when others doubted or fled, they trusted implicitly to their teachers, and openly espoused the Christian cause.¹⁷⁷

Just a few months later, on 12 January 1858, there was an emergency meeting in Exeter Hall, London, to articulate a missionary and evangelical response to the ‘Indian Crisis’, at which the Archbishop of Canterbury opened to reaffirm the nature of the missionary task:

That is our object — that is the purpose at which we aim, that missionaries may be sent out, by whose labours Christianity may be more extensively taught and made known; in hope that victories in the field by which God has blessed our arms may be followed by the peaceful but more glorious victories of the Cross. It is only by these peaceful means that we can hope success fully to assail the idolatry and superstition that prevail in that country. It is not force that we desire to exercise - the Kingdom of God is not extended by compulsion. It is the more necessary to make this known, and bring it forward on all occasions, because what is said in England is read with avidity in India: and, also, because our principle is not the principle of those with whom we have to deal. They will be slow to understand that we are not looking to force to carry the cause we desire to promote.¹⁷⁸

Meanwhile, Eugene Stock, erstwhile historian of the CMS, described the response to the Indian mutiny as provoking an unprecedented advance for CMS, an ‘annus mirabilis’ for the cause of missions in general. Government consternation concerning the negative influence of missionaries in India was met with popular financial and prayerful support that bolstered missions in general and the CMS in particular.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ ‘Agra During the Indian Mutiny’, p.14.

¹⁷⁸ Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, pp. 262-264; I.Copland, ‘Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The ambiguous case of India under the Company, c.1813-1858’, *The Historical Journal*, 49, (4) (December 2006), pp. 1028; D. L. Robert, *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (Grand Rapids, 2008), p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ CMS Special General Meeting, Exeter Hall, London, Tuesday 12 January 1858, p. 6.

The Indian mutiny, and its deeply felt repercussions across the British Empire, does much to strengthen the assertion of Bremner that the era under study cannot rightly be parcelled into British and colonial or Indian histories, for the multiple histories were so intertwined as to be properly understood and analysed as a single history. And this was expressed at the time in concepts of a global church with a global reach, in which the English had to find their vocation.¹⁸⁰ The worldwide spread of ideas and churchmanship, which Bremner illustrates in architectural intentions and practices makes it clear ‘that the organisation and maintenance of these connections revealed Britain and its Empire to be a continuous field of Anglican activity and agency’.¹⁸¹ He adds:

If Anglicanism in the mid-nineteenth century was both perceived and directed as a global initiative then the effects of this must necessarily have impacted upon the United Kingdom.¹⁸²

It was the opinion of the Church Missionary Society, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bengal missionaries that culpability lay in part with the Europeans, and that it was cause for a renewed push for prayer for the evangelisation and transformation of India:

They feel more urgently than ever the need of redoubled efforts on the part of God's people, both here and in England, to diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel through this land. Especially when it is considered that this rebellion, unspeakably disastrous as it is, is likely to break down some of the most formidable barriers to the free course of the Gospel — not the least of these is the system of *caste*.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, pp. xxii, 1-3, 8, 9. Bremner largely develops the initial Pocock thesis, see the following: J. G. A. Pocock, ‘The Limits and Divisions of British History’, *Studies in Public Policy*, 31 (Glasgow, 1979), p. 7; ‘British History: A Plea for a New Subject’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 8 (1) (1974), p. 5; and *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (4) (1975), pp. 601-621.

¹⁸¹ Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, p. 433.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 323. See also the effect of other returning missionaries and colonial clergy on Britain.

¹⁸³ CMS Special General Meeting, Exeter Hall, London, Tuesday 12 January 1858, pp. 10-11. Notice the persistent theme of Providence, the wrath of God perceived in human national and political events in the present and in the past, not just in sacred Scripture.

And so when the Gasters approached Agra, there were everywhere signs of the unrest which also reminded them of the providential work of God. They travelled through the garrison town of 'Cawnpur' [Cawnpore] which had been the scene of the inflammatory and infamous hacking and butchering of 120 British women and children, whose remains were thrown down a well. The attacks had begun on 5 June, the very day the Gasters were being commissioned in London, and the violence continued all month, leading to vicious and enraged retributions also from the British forces. Thomas and Selina were deeply psychologically and emotionally affected:

I went to see the well in which are sleeping so many of our dear sisters and their little children, until the great trumpet shall sound, and Jesus shall come 'to judge the quick and the dead.' The perpetrators of this murder are still at large, but we remember that it is written, 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord', and it is with deep emotion one reads the inscriptions on the cross near the well, 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead.' Other spots of terrible interest were pointed out, all situated on ground which looks as if it had been blasted by God's anger for ever. 'Verily there is a God which judgeth the earth.'¹⁸⁴

This was a typical evangelical response, strong in Providence, tinged with nationalism, and with a quick citing of scripture references and a credal confidence. They entered the city of Agra at midnight on 18 October, and the next day were welcomed by Mr Clinton in the mission house close to St John's College. French and Shackell were out on a missionary tour when they arrived.¹⁸⁵ Several years later the CMS missionary, John Barton, would make the same journey, arrive in Agra, be based at St John's, begin language study and seek to make contact with Shackell, who had been principal of St John's after French. Barton ended up taking up the principalship of the college to release Shackell to itinerant preaching and evangelisation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Gaster's account of arriving in Agra, *Church Missionary Gleaner* (April 1859), p. 38.

¹⁸⁵ See Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, pp. 65, 66, on the recruiting of Rev. French from Oxford University and the grounding in CMS he had in the parish.

¹⁸⁶ J. Barton memoir in Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, p. 248; C. P. Williams, *The Ideal of a Self-Governing Church*, p. 120-150; and 'Memoirs of John Barton', 'Memoirs of Emily Barton' in Emily Eugenia Barton Elliott Papers, CMS archive; C. Barton, *John Barton: A Memoir* (London, 1910).

Gaster's fresh eyes began to contrast the etched depictions of Agra, and the fort and the Taj Mahal with what confronted him.¹⁸⁷ Gaster's hope and impression are articulate concerning the built environment, but peculiarly quiet when describing the countryside or nature. His exuberant support of the mission church is obvious, as is the emotive language used for contrasted built spaces. The Reformation church is 'lit up with the morning sun' [Fig.1] whilst the Roman Catholic church is 'curious, sightless and mistaken':

To the right of our church, outside the city, is the curious and sightless tower of the Romish cathedral, which reminds one forcibly of an attenuated but respectable chimney added to a church by mistake.

Other church and mission buildings are less described than admired:

Passing to the left, we arrive at the college, where Mr French has so long carried on his work, with God's blessing, to the hundreds in the city. It is a building of great beauty, and eminently adapted for the climate, except the roof, which is very thin, and must quickly become very hot. Opposite our college is the medical college, and the Kuttra church is close to St. John's College also.¹⁸⁸

The description carries on like a guided tour, emphasising issues of the 'strange' and 'exotic' and 'curious' and yet the far-imagined East is contrasted wherever possible with the English:

¹⁸⁷ Gaster's account of arriving in Agra, *Church Missionary Gleaner* (April 1859), p. 39: 'The city of Agra stands on the right bank of the Jumna, about 300 miles above its junction with the Ganges at Allahabad. The approach to it from the left bank of the river is by a floating bridge, half a mile in length. Imagine yourself about to cross into the city early in the morning. Before you is the heavy fort, built of red sandstone, with its massive out works, although more than a mile round. It is not like the pictures of the Fort of Agra, most popular in England, but presents a monotonous gloomy front to the river, with the top of the exquisite Moti Musjid (pearl mosque) looking over the battlements. Far to the left is the Taj Mahal, the beauty of beauties in the whole range of architecture, sitting in the midst of an evergreen paradise, like a queen arrayed in pure white amid her less gorgeously dressed companions. To the right of the fort, and on a very elevated position, is the spire of our Mission Church, lit up with the morning sun.'

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

On either side are houses which have overhanging stories, reminding forcibly of the old streets in some of our old English towns. Most of the houses have balconies in front, some very curiously contrived, and all very neat. Every house is a shop below, and sometimes above too. Each shop has an open front in which the goods are displayed, and in the midst, sits or sleeps the proprietor, who, in his strange costume, and with his hukha (pipe), is the most attractive object of all. Natives abound in every direction, and every now and then an Afghan on his camel, or a Sikh, comes solemnly through the bazaar, or one of the noisy bullock-trucks, very like those depicted in some of the Nineveh sculptures, jogs along.

Gaster's description of his early days in Agra carry all the enthusiasm, estrangement and judgements of someone in acute culture shock, the trauma of seeing a well filled with recently slaughtered bodies, and the stark awareness of difference. He seemed surprised that the city would have 'natives abounding in every direction' and yet he filters the India experience through the biblical and symbolic lens, referencing Nineveh. For many missionaries in their early stages of inculturation the imaginative world of story books, histories and the Bible events and places provide the cultural hermeneutic. The perceived connection between Nineveh and India was particularly cultural pertinent due to the recent archaeological discoveries of the Nineveh site and the publication of these discoveries by Austen Henry Layard in 1850.¹⁸⁹ By the end of the first year of deployment several strains with the dual accountability and operational arrangements are already showing. Thomas claims he has become 'the victim of some unkindness from Mr Cuthbert' and seeks to defend himself and his reputation.¹⁹⁰ His wife, Selina, is a victim of appalling toothache, and the medical bills have crippled him financially. Nevertheless, they are in Agra, where Gaster now works 'for a few hours each day' in a school for girls, and appears to have some oversight of this work for he has cause to employ some other French staff.

¹⁸⁹ A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London, 1850); See also T. Larsen, 'Nineveh' in D. Gange and M. Ledger-Lomas (eds.), *Cities of God: The Bible and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 111-135, and also D. Gange and M. Ledger-Lomas, *Introduction*, pp. 1-22.

¹⁹⁰ T. J. Gaster, letter to London Committee, 22 November 1858. Rev. G. Cuthbert received several letters from the London Committee (CMS archive, Section 6, Part 1, Reel 8, C I I L 4: Letter Book, 1851-1857) which show that the salaries of the missionaries needed increasing, and that health problems had arisen. It shows the debate more from Rev. G. Cuthbert's point of view.

The entrepreneurial streak in Gaster and his sympathy with fellowship and prayer with members of other denominations can be demonstrated to have been normative to the founding intentions of the organisation he worked for. His desire to plant and establish indigenous churches, his strong links with the Poplar home church, his work with education, his emphasis on the indigenous unreached population in his early ministry, as well as his low expectations of the Anglican episcopal hierarchy, can all be seen to be normative for those in the CMS network.

Gaster's journal-keeping, his accounts of mission practice, and even his independent-mindedness were entirely in-keeping with the aims and intentions of the mission, and of her founding rules and resolutions. Yet he was also part of a larger global movement whose reach and optimism had seldom been seen before or since, and who successfully founded indigenous churches all across the known world. The style of leadership he had learned within this agency was self-consciously designed to use exceptional individuals to serve and grow churches in exceptionally challenging conditions.

Bosch suggests that several models of mission have been developed, sometimes simultaneously in missionary theology and practice over the centuries.¹⁹¹ The missionary method of Gaster employs several models concurrently. Bosch identified 'mission as inculturation', stressing the decisive influence of Western colonialism, cultural superiority feelings, and 'manifest destiny' exercised on the Western missionary enterprise and the extent to which this compromised the gospel. Maughan agrees with the suggestion that too often there was a post-Constantinian confusion of gospel and culture, leading to cultural domination of the 'inferior' by the 'superior' culture, and the losing of the gospel in the process, though asserts that this was more obvious in missions associated with the SPG than with the CMS.¹⁹² This tension is still palpably present in the CMS history, and the engagement with the principles of indigenous or 'native' churches.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, e.g. p. 409ff; 420ff; 447ff; 474ff.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 448,

¹⁹³ see S. S. Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good*, p. 5, 74.

While it is undoubtedly true that Gaster was very comfortable with the merger of Christianity and culture in his own nation, this was not so uncritical as might be assumed. There are several points at which Gaster is self-consciously alienating himself from his home culture for both theological and missionary motives. The expressed desire of the CMS ¹⁹⁴ was to recruit missionary pioneers who would be committed to the founding of churches in the target regions, raise up local, indigenous leaders and then move on to other parts and communities. Moreover, it will be seen that Gaster was able to strongly identify, at least politically, with the needs of his 'brothers' in Christ, of Indian race, against his own British government. This was sometimes articulated within the CMS community and the missionary communities around the question ultimately of whether there would be one combined church of English and native Christians intermixed, or whether there would be two. Venn argued increasingly that only two separate structures co-existing could safeguard the genuine freedom of non-English churches, while Eugene Stock became sympathetic with the idea of one combined and unified church. Gaster inhabits this tension — asserting the essential unity of native and English churches by speaking of the true Christian identity of Indian Christians as brothers. Nevertheless, on most occasions he ran the 'native' churches in atypical settings, but ministered to the expatriates and elevated Indians together in the mission churches or barracks.

In August 1861, from his second placement in Simla, he wrote to the London Committee on behalf of the suffering native Christians, contesting that: 'missionaries ought to take the side of the suffering.' ¹⁹⁵ He wonders whether:

Christians in England will calmly stand by to see their brothers in India cruelly persecuted by so-called Christian government for exposing the tyranny of the worst specimens of nominal Christians to be found in India.

¹⁹⁴ This is explored ably in C. P. Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden, 1990), especially pp. 68-71, on the contested vision in South India and the impact of Venn's ideals; also in W. R. Shenk, *Henry Venn, Missionary Statesman* (New York, 1983) which make it clear that the ideals of Venn were often hard to put in to practice especially in West Africa and India where colonial power made the handing over of churches to indigenous leadership contested.

¹⁹⁵ 'Native' is a catch-all term which excludes Europeans, Americans and the British. It was a term which could be used to champion the rights of the oppressed (as in this instance) but also to justify a dual system of rights.

The nominal Christians at fault appear to be English. The incident he is referring to is the trial of a fellow CMS missionary, the Rev. J. Long, who was being prosecuted for, and was eventually convicted of, translating a Bengali play about Indigo planters, *Neel Durpan*. Dinabandhu Mitra, one of the most powerful dramatists of nineteenth-century Bengal, wrote his first play *Neel Darpan* in 1860 on the oppression of the ‘white indigo’ workers in Bengal in the 1850s. The play revolves around an old landholder and his family: it graphically dramatises the plight of that family and the peasants of Lower Bengal through scenes of physical torture, rape, murder and death. The Bangla play was a contemporary stage success by itself. However, it became historically and politically famous after it was translated into English as *The Mirror of Indigo Planters* in 1861. This gave rise to the subsequent swift trial of Rev. James Long, who confessed to have published and edited the translation as a part of India's colonial history. It also testifies to the importance of translation in the project of the British Empire.¹⁹⁶ Translation went in both directions. Hepzibah Israel suggests that the Tamil Bible stands apart from other religious literature in that it used mainly prose forms of language in order to distinguish it from the form of literature and interpretation that existed within Tamil Hindi sacred writings. Therefore, the translation of plays and poems and other literature by the missionaries must be seen as a significant decision to engage with the culture they were called to reach.¹⁹⁷

In this confrontation, one which Gaster felt compelled to speak out about, it was clear that missionaries straddling the two societies of Europe and the indigenous Indian population could be caught in the cross-fire.¹⁹⁸ Marshman, a contemporary commentator in London, argues that the government in India, far from supporting missionaries in India, had tried to create distance, whilst at the same time in England missionaries were being blamed for provoking the mutinous reaction. Back in India, Long, in his court hearings, protested his innocence. As a translator, he argued that good communication should always be in the cause of peace, yet the flurry of rebellions from 1857 to 1860 unsettled the establishment, and in this court case the

¹⁹⁶ J. Sanyal, ‘Vernacular Dressing and English Re-Dressings: Translating *Neel Darpan*’ *Anukriti*, 1 (2) (October 2004).

¹⁹⁷ Israel, *Religious Transactions*, pp. 169-177. G. A. Oddie, *Missionaries, Rebellion and Proto-nationalism: James Long of Bengal* (Richmond, 1999).

¹⁹⁸ J. C. Marshman, ‘On the causes of the Indian Mutiny’ (25 January 1859) in J. Wolffe (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain: Culture and Empire* Vol. 5 (Manchester, 1997), pp. 300-304.

State held only the missionary to blame for the seditious work of translation, even though the Bangla author wanted to share the punishment of the missionary. Long, and the book-selling missionary Gaster, saw the work of translation of the arts going alongside the propagation of the gospel, and the lifting of the 'degradation of the peasants' as preparation for the gospel:

I can only state ...what is personal to myself as to the motives which actuated me to publish the *Nil Darpan*, on the grounds of my being a missionary — an expounder of native feeling as expressed in the native press — a friend to securing peace for Europeans in the country - and a friend to the social elevation of the natives.¹⁹⁹

The treatment of a colleague in such circumstances may well have fostered his declining expectations of those in authority at the time within the British government and establishment. Even the Church of England could not be relied upon to make decisions that furthered the gospel, and defended the weak and the vulnerable. Theology and disillusionment began to coalesce.²⁰⁰

Gaster also deployed Bosch's category of mission as indigenisation. By the end of July 1861, he was working hard in Simla and had begun a Sanatorium, he had planted a 'native church', was looking for a suitable site for a new mission station, and had reported on the 'decided failure' of the mission work at 'Kolegush'. He started a prayer meeting, like the weekly meeting at Agra, to 'cry out to God', and the ensuing letters are evidence of the change in fortunes that follow the ministry, and begin to affect the character of Simla more widely.²⁰¹ The work in Simla prospered, as did the public proclamation of the gospel in the vernacular and the discipleship of Non-European Christians. He hired an old shop and turned it into the 'native church', to which 15 came each week.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ A. Rao and B. G. Rao, *The Blue Devil: Indigo and Colonial Bengal*, trans.by Dinabandhu Mitra (Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, 1992), p. 147.

²⁰⁰ Gavin R. G. Hambly, 'Review of B. B. Kling, *The Blue Mutiny: The Indigo Disturbances in Bengal, 1859-1862*' (Philadelphia, 1966), *Pacific Affairs*, 41 (2) (Summer 1968), p. 317; Asiaticus, 'The Rise and Fall of the Indigo Industry in India', *The Economic Journal*, 22 (86) (June 1912), pp. 237-247; K. W. Jones, 'Review of Avril Ann Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53 (1) (February 1994), pp. 264-266.

²⁰¹ T. J. Gaster, letter, 27 July 1861.

²⁰² T. J. Gaster, letter, 14 September 1861.

A letter of 12 July 1859 also shows something of his personal evangelistic methodology, and the way in which this was responded to in the early days of engagement in Agra. Like many of his evangelical contemporaries, he supported the ministry of colporteurs, selling copies of the Bible, New Testaments and Christian tracts and literature. The particular ministry he gave himself to was in selling copies of the Gospels in Hindi and Urdu. He was astonished at the hunger for the Scriptures. His determination to place the Gospels into the hands of non-English speakers, and his refusal to see his missionary task solely in terms of ministry to the Expatriate community clearly irritated or alarmed others, even other clergy, who he said 'oppose my methods.'²⁰³ He was also preaching every week in Urdu in the Agra mission church (one must therefore assume that the six months in Calcutta and Agurparah were spent in intensive language study), and 'holding Bible classes twice weekly to Hindus and native Christians, to the native Christian artillery-men'. However, this determined missionary work amongst the indigenous population did not bar him from some ministry amongst the English, for he occasionally preached in English at the Civil Lines Church, and to the soldiers: 'Last Sunday morning at 5.30am I preached in open air to 1700 British soldiers drawn up in the form of a hollow square.'²⁰⁴

Bosch also suggests that mission was to be understood as an activity of globalisation. C. A. Bayly concurs, arguing that the new religious energy had borrowed from maturing globalisation and given rise to a:

...great surge in the publication of missionary and religious journals. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the breach in the English-speaking world caused by the American revolution had largely been healed by 1830, and that the linked missionary activities within and outside this purview of the British empire were a critical reason for the rapprochement between them.²⁰⁵

Sjoblom's study of Swedish evangelical support of mission demonstrates many similarities with the CMS missionary connection with Britain. Sjoblom maintains

²⁰³ T. J. Gaster, letter, 12 July 1859.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Bayly, *Birth*, p. 357.

that globalisation and mission are inseparable. In Sweden, it was the imaging of Africa, through magazines especially, that linked up the Swedish and the Indian and African context — a sense of the global faith was evident. ‘The missionaries are merely the representatives of the missionising congregation. The mission supporters are the ones who missionise,’ an EFS missionary to India proclaimed in 1891. While the missionaries are often portrayed as the protagonists of mission history, the breadth of the movement in Sweden was fundamental not only for fundraising but also for the way the mission was conceptualised. Tens of thousands of missionary supporters participated actively through reading, fundraising, and prayer, and an analogy of the body was often used to convey this organic structure.²⁰⁶ The missionary feedbacks were just as important, for the home churches were as much the power of mission as the missionaries on the field. Sjoblom’s study of three Swedish nineteenth-century missionary journals, whilst contrasting them, maintains that the distinction between sending and receiving churches is overplayed. The biblical cadence of missionary writings points to a transnational evangelical culture, with joint resonance and dependence on the same key scriptural texts, such as Acts 1:8, Acts 16:5-9 and Matthew 28:19.²⁰⁷ Bremner evidences the same inter-connecting dynamic for British churches and missions:

Importantly the effects of this process of ‘globalisation’ were not only visited upon the non-European world but also had perceptible, even distinct, repercussions upon the church at home. The continual flow of information, materials and manpower from centre to periphery and

²⁰⁶ Gustav Sjoblom, ‘The Missionary Image of Africa: Evidence from Sweden 1885-1895’, Henry Martyn Seminar paper, Darwin College, 20 February 2003 at Westminster College, Cambridge. [<http://www.martynmission.cam.ac.uk/CSjoblom.htm>]. Accessed 10 January 2009. One mission article writes: ‘The mission supporters and ourselves form one body, in which each limb and part has its particular assignment, but at the same time they mutually depend on each other. The mission supporters at home are the central part of the mission body, the trunk, and we missionaries are its arms, legs and mouth’.

²⁰⁷ Sjoblom goes further in his thesis, establishing that globalisation evidenced particularly within evangelical supporters of mission, affected the general fabric of Swedish life, having a profound effect on what might be termed the ‘sending’ culture: ‘The period from 1870 has not for nothing been called the classic age of globalisation. International flows of capital, goods and people skyrocketed, and for the first time their scale was global. The missionary movement with its dependence on international religious, cultural, and personal networks, and its purpose to connect the world can be seen as a social, cultural, and religious concomitant - not merely a response. In 1880 Sweden was essentially Christian, and the missionary movement widened the horizon from Lutheran parochialism to global universalism. It was part of a decisive event in Swedish history - the discovery of the world, the rise of a global consciousness, the broadening of the horizons of Swedes of all strata to embrace the globe in its entirety’. ‘Gå äfwen du och gör sammaledes’ in *Svenska Kyrkans Missions-Tidning* (1890), p. 205.

back again meant that the English Church as a whole, both in Britain and throughout the Empire, was part of the same expanded field of operation, in which all the constituent elements were touched and transformed by the experience in some form or another.²⁰⁸

The constituent parts cannot and should not be separated. Despite the obvious difficulties presented by the large distances involved, local churches in London were intimately involved in the practical business of mission. In July 1859 Gaster added a few details in his regular reports concerning support of the work of the school in India, by his sending church in Poplar. Miss Gillbeck, had agreed to become Secretary to the Hindu Girls' school, despite her Poplar postal address, and would receive gifts. The enormous distances and the delivery-time needed for letters, gifts and workers seemed to present no conceptual or organisational break either to Thomas himself, nor to his family, friends and supporters back in England. It can be seen in this small detail an indication that the Empire might have been considered by the missionary evangelicals to be provincial and not truly international.

Brown further reinforces this impression:

The fervour for evangelising among the unchurched masses at home was accompanied by a new zeal for overseas missions. The same imperatives that drove men and women to preach the gospel to the labouring poor in barns, cottages and open fields also called some to seek to bring Christianity to the heathen masses in India, Africa or the Pacific islands.²⁰⁹

But this was given an impetus in England that was not equally shared by German or Swedish Lutheran churches, a sense of manifest, providential destiny which knitted the task of mission to the opportunity afforded by a global empire:

There was widespread belief that the evangelical awakening and French Revolution marked the beginning of a new era in world history

²⁰⁸ Bremner, *Imperial Gothic*, p. 324.

²⁰⁹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 31.

— that all things might now be possible, and that Britain, with its expanding empire, had a particular responsibility before God.²¹⁰

The Narrative Theme in Mission Reporting

As in the insights of congregational and ethnographic studies, which stress the importance of narrative transmission in forging and forming identity, the narrative form for communication was the primary form for the Victorian missionary, and for the missionary supporters. The journals and the reports of missionaries were under pressure for results. With the rise of print media, the reports were directly linked to potential new funds for any part of the mission of God. Anna Johnston notices that even female authors started using bombastic prose to describe the advance of the mission and the battle against evil.²¹¹ The letters of Thomas Gaster were considered as material to be published and the information sent to supporters of the work, and extracts to be published in the CMS magazines. However, this had to be balanced with truth-telling and authenticity. Another letter received by the General Committee in London from Gaster concerns such a re-printing of his reports from India.²¹² A picture reprinted in the April 1859 edition of *The Gleaner* had been adapted to make it appear more picturesque, and the written report edited so much that the whole sense of the report now gives the opposite impression than the one which was intended by Gaster. Evidently the starry-eyed tone of the passage we have already examined concerning the architecture in Agra was in no way the impression he had been intending to give of the city upon his first encounter. As his enthusiasm for progress in evangelism is seen from his July letter, so this indicates his anxiety not to give a false impression in England of the work in India. In particular, he was upset that all that is hard, dirty, painful and unglamorous has been disguised for the suburban palate of missionary supporters in England. He blames the editors and asks for an apology and assurances that what he reports home would not have its meaning twisted for republication. The tensions of distance and the powerlessness of the missionary embedded on the mission-field had risen to the surface.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

²¹¹ A. Johnston, 'Missionary Writing and Empire', *Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, 38 (Cambridge, 2003) and G. Griffiths, "'Trained to Tell the Truth": Missionaries, Converts, and Narration' (2005), pp. 153-172 (153-155) in Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (2008) both explore these pressures.

²¹² T. J. Gaster, letter to London Committee, April 1859.

Gaster lived in this same age of proto-globalisation, evident to a large degree in congregation and society.²¹³ First, his home church in Poplar was actively involved in the support of the missionary work, receiving reports direct from Gaster, holding a fund for toys for the girls in the school. In a very real way, the Poplar church was part of the missionary work in India. Gaster's period of ministry in Simla emphasised this also, for in the far-flung reaches of the Empire personal friendships between Poplar, Clapham and North India had the capacity to bear much fruit, and we will see in Peckham that contacts made in Simla ended up providing support for a new church initiative in the emerging suburbs of London. Secondly, despite the passage of time for letters to make their way to and from India, the London Committee were intimately involved in the day to day ministry of Agra and Simla, involved in precise correspondence with Gaster and other missionaries. Gaster considered, in fact, that their advice, motivations and decisions were superior to those of the local representatives in Calcutta.

Bosch's categorisations of mission are helpful here, for it can be seen that the missionary evangelicalism evidenced by Gaster considered mission to be an overarching motivation of which evangelism was a constituent part.²¹⁴ For Gaster, mission was not understood solely as evangelism, though a 'turning to Christ' is looked for and celebrated where it occurs in his writings, especially in Simla. Gospel preaching and conversion are both implicit and explicit aims. However, Gaster and the CMS missionaries with whom he laboured in India operated with multiple missionary models, not just as a team, but as individuals. Gaster shows special evidence of mission as inculturation, transformation, indigenisation, evangelism to people of other faiths and to nominal Christians and an activity of a global church. The use of multiple models doesn't mean that 'everything was mission.'²¹⁵ Gaster's

²¹³ Bayly, *Birth*, pp. 325-365, 468-70 prefers to lay out an era of archaic globalisation (from 1683) and a new globalisation of Empire from about 1840 and to draw parallels with the religious currents in Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. By proto-globalisation I mean that which is emergent over a hundred years before the contemporary era but has many of the multi-centred engines of change and which saw the flow of people and ideas across the world under the auspices of the global British Empire. In this sense it is more a prototype than an archaic form.

²¹⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 411-419, 511-518. Bosch articulates no fewer than eighteen ways in which evangelism and mission can and should be distinguished.

²¹⁵ To reference S. Neill, *Creative Tension* (London, 1959) Duff Lectures; and S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India, 1707-1858* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 255ff, and see also A. F. Walls and C. Ross, *Mission in the Twenty First Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (London, 2008), p. 64.

approach shows ingenuity and a continual re-trying of different forms of mission. From the start he was employed to preach and teach not just religious truth but more general education, to minister amongst people of many differing faiths as well as Christians from different nationalities and denominational backgrounds. Bosch suggested that mission critics have wrongly supposed that 'mission was only what Western missionaries were doing by way of saving souls, planting churches and imposing their ways and wills on others, whereas mission was never limited to these activities and often had a more far-reaching impact'.²¹⁶ There are also understandings of mission which are notably absent — Gaster never believed in salvation through 'the church' as an institution, but through personal faith in Christ; he never believed that cultural Christianity alone was genuine Christianity; he never had a sacramental approach to mission; sanctification was not just a forensic declaration upon baptism but a process which demanded repentance. He stressed proclamation which looked for personal transformation and an experiential element to personal prayer and worship. Gaster's approach bears out Bosch's concluding affirmations.

This entire study has evolved from the assumption that the definition of mission is a continual process of sifting, testing, reformulating, and discarding. Transforming mission means both that mission is to be understood as an activity that transforms reality and that there is a constant need for mission itself to be transformed.²¹⁷

Gaster's multiple approaches to mission were constantly sifted, tested, reformulated, and some of them discarded when he reapplied the task of mission to the differing social contexts of Agra and Simla. His focus became more and more pronounced towards those of his own ethnic background, even in India during his second posting in Simla, and this radically affected his practice even if his theology remained largely unchanged. In particular, though he evangelised amongst those of other faiths in India, when he arrived back in London his involvement in that activity shifted from personal evangelism to supporting and sending money and human resources in the direction of the CMS he once worked with.

²¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 519.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51

Missionary Evangelicalism and The Word of God

As expected for a CMS missionary, Gaster's evangelicalism demonstrated several signs of holding to the supremacy of the Word of God for thought and conduct. This section will examine two of his approaches to Scripture in his early phase of ministry, in the practice of Bible distribution and in a sermon on prophecy preached in Agra in 1859. Bebbington states that biblicism is a defining feature of evangelicals, and that though they could be said to 'revere the Bible', the early evangelicals' overriding aim was 'to bring home the message of the Bible and to encourage its devotional use rather than to develop a doctrine of Scripture.'²¹⁸ Later developments both in America and Britain concerning specific clarification of differing theologies of inerrancy and infallibility, and discussions about the exact nature of the verbal inspiration of the writers, are not painstakingly explored during the point at which Gaster is preaching and writing. Although Bebbington traces this separation of ways to the 1820s, in Gaster's writings up to the 1890s one can only discern a robust and broad defence of the utter reliability and the divine authority of the Scriptures for doctrine and Christian practice. It is clear, however, that Gaster believed that the Bible was revelation of God to the whole world and not just to those who were practising Christians. He would have happily taken Wesley's label of being 'a man of one book'.²¹⁹

His use of Scripture reveals much; giving out Scripture portions to members of other living faiths, preaching open-air and at services for people from many different backgrounds and in several languages, and finally we can view something of his hermeneutics and eschatology with a close analysis of his only extant sermon, preached in India. In particular, an extended examination of this sermon will demonstrate that beyond the headline declaration of 'biblicism' several divergent expositions developed, and lastly it will be shown that these expositions were shaped by millennial expectations and formulae which seemed natural and mainstream to Gaster, but now diverge from contemporary evangelicalism.

²¹⁸ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 12-14.

²¹⁹ Wesley, Preface to *Collected Sermons*, 1746.

In Agra in July 1859, the impact of Christian Scriptures upon the surrounding non-Christian population, which he had now witnessed first-hand amongst the trainee governesses, began to exercise his mind. After dismissing the idea of paying a local Indian to sell books, a new vision emerged: 'To set up a book stall in the public street for the sale of Scriptures and to turn stall-keeper myself.' He remained aware of how this might be received in England, and though aware of class distinctions in the home context, he nevertheless displays an unusual willingness for men of his age to consider these things hindrances to following the primary example of the missionary St. Paul, and adapting to meet the contemporary commission of presenting the gospel to the Muslims and Hindus of Northern India:

Now I have little doubt that some persons will think it beneath the dignity of a Clergyman to sit like a London Apple-woman at a stall;- but I believe S. Paul was a gentleman, and yet did many things for Christ quite as humiliating (?) as this. Accordingly, I purchased a small table, just such as the London stall-keepers use, and took it and a chair to the principal Bazaar, when most crowded, at sunset. Arrived there, I had the stall placed in front of a shop, and having heaped up a number of separate Gospels in Hindi and Urdu, I put up a bright red board with an announcement both in Urdu and Hindi, in order that both Mussulmans and Hindus should read it, with the following effect: 'This Sahib is selling Gospels whosoever wishes, let him take one.'²²⁰

He was 'surrounded by 150 Mussulmans, Hindus and Sikhs and in twenty minutes all 58 gospels were sold', and he had to close the stall. He mentions with amazement that this is a rate of three gospels sold per minute. The enthusiasm in his style, and the details he gives to this incident are signs of his personal priorities, as is his immediate decision to order more books, and sit at his stall weekly.

Sugirtharajah suggests that the impact of Scripture distribution has been overlooked. There was an army of native colporteurs employed by the British and Foreign Bible

²²⁰ T. J. Gaster, letter, 12 July 1859.

Society, who by 1900 had 1200 workers, half of whom worked in India and China, and in addition 687 Bible-women whose Bible distribution was crucial to the growth of Christianity in India and China.²²¹ There is an underlying assumption that reading the text alone, without the assistance of an interpreter, would be and should be enough to elicit a personal encounter with God.

Exposition of Scripture and Interpretation: Gaster's Agra sermon

Whereas much can be gleaned of the theology of Thomas Gaster by his practices and by the society to which he belonged, only through a close reading of this unique sermon can we gain detail of his theological method, framework and approach. Gaster was something of a representative rather than an exception in his theology and interpretive approach and manner, even where the specifics of his interpretations may have differed. Those studying nineteenth-century mainstream or central evangelical theology have often made comment of the widespread but distinctive approaches to eschatology and more generally to the interpretation of prophetic portions of Scripture.²²² Though Evangelicals in general believed that whatever the Bible taught was true, then, as now, it was not agreed how far the text was to be understood metaphorically, analogically or literally. This was especially pertinent with regard to the book of Revelation which was subjected to inordinate scrutiny.²²³ Bebbington describes the pervasive prevalence of historicists and futurists. The historicists 'tried to relate the various portions of the Book of Revelation to events that had already taken place in world history'. The futurists 'held that the predictions of the Book of Revelation... would not take place until the future'. In Britain in later years the historicist approach was exemplified through Spurgeon and Henry Grattan Guinness, though Moody gave much popularity to the futurist approach. Amongst the historicists, among whom Gaster would essentially be described, there was general

²²¹ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 140-168, suggests that the colporteurs with British and Foreign Bible Society had 1200 colporteurs and 687 Bible-women whose Bible distribution was crucial to the growth of Christianity in India and China.

²²² C. Gribben and T. C. F. Stunt, *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1880* (Carlisle, 2004), pp. 1-18; D. W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester, 2005), pp. 190-200; Harris, *Fundamentalism*, pp. 21-29, 147, 170, 260, 327-332.

²²³ M. Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons, Dissent and the Oriental Bible in Nineteenth-Century Britain' in S. Mandelbrote and M. Ledger-Lomas, *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c. 1650-1950* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 205-232 (207).

agreement over broad aspects, though ‘endless scope for debate about the details of the scheme’.²²⁴ English evangelicals of the nineteenth century had a greater sense of the normalcy of prophetic interpretations of Scripture than would be considered mainstream amongst today’s British successors.²²⁵ The only extant sermon by Thomas Gaster during this Indian phase of his ministry, delivered in Agra in the closing days of 1859, is therefore striking, and undermines certain aspects of contemporary evangelical hermeneutical assumptions. His assessment of time now appears wooden and bizarrely simplistic, his use of history is highly selective, his attitude to the Roman Catholic Church has almost now vanished in Britain, and his predictions have been proven to be false. In this sermon, Gaster enthusiastically traces various indicators, both in Scripture and in contemporary politics, which suggest a great era of change would ensue in 1866, leading, among other things, to the decline of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. This sermon was evidently popular amongst his hearers, and he was encouraged to have it printed. This, in turn, went some way to clearing debts incurred from expensive dental bills for his wife, and thereby clearing his reputation from the insinuations and accusations of the Calcutta Committee of CMS and Mr Cuthbert.

This brief pamphlet, *Hints on the Study of Prophecy*, is introduced with the passage to be discussed — Revelation 11:15. Gaster’s first stated aim in the sermon is to present an apologetic to the thoughtful sceptic, and to rescue the biblical text from ignorance, derision, and ridicule. He maintains that ludicrous interpretations have unwittingly invited scorn but that the text need not be impenetrable:

For many eminently pious men, whose holiness has happily exceeded their knowledge of history, have supplied the vacuum created by that want with the peculiar atmosphere in which they desire to view prophetic intimations; hence have arisen the most contradictory and often absurd interpretations of passages not otherwise obscure than men have made them so: and infinite matter for the ridicule of sceptics

²²⁴ Bebbington, *Dominance*, p. 196-200; H. G. Guinness, *The Approaching End of the Age: Viewed in the Light of History, Prophecy and Science* (London, 1878); Etherington, *Missions and Empire*, p. 15-18.

²²⁵ J. C. Miller, ‘The Promised Coming’ in *Sermons* (London, 1838), pp.1-23, for example, is a futurist interpretation.

has been prepared unwittingly by the shallow expositors of the symbolical Revelations of the Holy Spirit.²²⁶

He maintains that the nature of prophecy is essentially cumulative, and must be understood in that way. He cites Joseph Butler's great apologetic work, *The Analogy of Religion*,²²⁷ which in seeking to answer deists and naturalists, Gaster considered to be standard reading, but was written neither to provide a response to Islam nor to pantheistic Hinduism which were the majority worldviews of the population of Agra. However, one of the evidences given for demonstrating the truth of Christianity within reasoned thought was prophecy and fulfilment, which is the portion assumed herein. Gaster is not intending to produce an idiosyncratic approach to prophetic Scripture but attempting to tread between thoroughgoing supernaturalism and the reductionist readings of the deist and rationalist sceptic:

In the present sermon it will be my intention to enquire briefly, what the present state of affairs in the world indicates with regard to the particular spot in which the army of God has arrived in its march heavenwards. And in doing so, I trust by God's grace to guard myself equally from the charge of a cold indifference to prophecy on the one hand, or the accusation of a heated imagination on the other.²²⁸

Gaster then gives a brief introduction to the Book of Revelation, suggesting a schema for interpretation from E. Elliot's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*²²⁹ and subsequent year-day principles and dating schema seem heavily dependent on this specific work. He calculated from passages such as Daniel 11:24 and Ezekiel 4 that a day represents a year: 'From this we infer that in the language of prophecy, a day in the symbol is put

²²⁶ Gaster, *Hints on the Study of Prophecy: A Sermon preached in the Church of St Paul's, Agra, by the Revd T. J. Gaster CMS, June 26 1859* (Delhi, 1860), p.1: 'And the seventh Angel sounded, and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, "The Kingdoms of this World are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever".' (KJV).

²²⁷ J. Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (London, 1736), pp. 181-206, 239-275.

²²⁸ Gaster, Agra sermon, p. 2.

²²⁹ E. Elliott, *Horæ Apocalypticæ: Or, a Commentary on the Apocalypse, Critical and Historical; Including Also an Examination of the Chief Prophecies of Daniel. Illustrated by an Apocalyptic Chart, and Engravings from Medals and Other Extant Monuments of Antiquity*. Volume 3 (London, 1847) see especially pp. 189-201. On 1260 days see p. 251.

for a year in its fulfilment.²³⁰ While Gaster cannot be described as an intentional literalist, he has what might be considered a literalist approach to the interpretation of prophecy, using one reference to build an argument for the correct interpretation of another.²³¹ Although Gaster intended for his principles of interpretation to appear rational and biblical, his system, which he shared with many others, remains open to flights of arbitrary reasoning, and demands such a cumulative interpretation that one flaw could jeopardise the whole. It was not uncommon to read into natural events potential prophetic messages and signs of portents. John Ruskin, though not evangelical, preached a series of lectures inspired by different clouds and had no trouble in drawing allusions from nature to prophecy and daily events.²³²

Noll points out the nineteenth-century prevalence of common sense and Baconian reasoning in evangelical hermeneutics, especially in America, and Gaster can be seen as evidence of this thesis. Where evangelicalism teams up with such philosophy, he suggests this can be called a 'literalist and Reformed' approach, but suggests that the evangelical theologians and preachers themselves had perhaps employed these philosophical presumptions unwittingly.²³³ Nevertheless these hermeneutic conventions could often become so intertwined that they could be relied upon almost as much as the Bible itself, and that it was allied to a democratisation of Bible reading, which was in itself a result of evangelical emphasis on the importance of Scripture for individual devotion and study. Noll tellingly writes that 'belief in Scripture was never as simple as believers in the Bible alone assumed'²³⁴ and that the uniformity of common sense approaches to Scripture and the reformed conviction that it was the Word of God were almost universally accepted, thereby hiding the sense in which these convictions were themselves theological statements, convictions and conventions. What is notable, despite this unsatisfactory exegesis of Gaster's common sense, literalist, dating system is Gaster's skill in communication, and his

²³⁰ Gaster, Agra sermon, p.3. W. H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millenialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland, 1979), has demonstrated that prophetic voices and millenialist interpretations were 'significant at all social levels' and were never confined to one socio-economic group. S. Collini *et al.* (eds.), *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 205.

²³¹ c.f. 2 Peter 3:8: 'a day is like a thousand years' is widely considered to be analogy rather than a basis for futuristic calculations.

²³² J. Ruskin, *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century: Two Lectures Delivered at the London Institution, February 4th and 11th, 1884* (Orpington, 1884).

²³³ M. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 367-373.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

ability to boil down the pertinent points into a short and easily accessible sermon for non-experts and congregants. He also sets his teaching persuasively within a specifically Indian context, using corroborating evidence from Indian Islamic sources as well as historical Western ones. Even in such a dense argument, he is able to bring in illustrations and analogies to more ably communicate with his hearers.

Evangelical preachers, especially those of renown, were seldom dry and inexpressive; their preaching was often powerful and popular, interesting and emotive, accompanied by great flights of pathos, oratory and contemporary engagement. It would be inaccurate to suggest that his sermon style was ‘never travelling beyond the obvious meaning of the passage’ and it is doubtful whether this was ever considered a universal benchmark of evangelical hermeneutic orthodoxy. For example, Spurgeon makes short shrift of those who advocated a purely analytical and drily logical approach to the text:

Many writers upon homiletics condemn in unmeasured terms even the occasional spiritualising of the text. ‘Select texts’, they say, ‘which give plain, literal sense; never travel beyond the obvious meaning of the passage; never allow yourself to accommodate or adapt’... but I humbly beg leave to dissent from this learned opinion, believing it to be more fastidious than correct, more plausible than true.²³⁵

The importance of communication stretched to the evangelistic appeal at the end of the sermon preached to the largely English and Anglophile congregation of Agra:

My dear brethren! The end of all things is at hand! Death at any rate must soon lay this whole congregation low, and our spirits must return to God who gave them. We shall meet again — you and I — in another world; and you shall not then be able to tell God that I never warned you to flee to Jesus! Amid the wreck of a crumbling world, do you cry unceasingly to God?; and when the storm shall have subsided, you shall find yourselves safe on the blissful shore, where there is no

²³⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students* (Tain, 2005), p. 109.

need of the light, and Jesus shall wipe away all tears from off all faces.²³⁶

The strongly providentialist and historicist underpinning of Gaster's paradigm gives final expression in these closing words. Even in a sermon that is purporting to be a guide to biblical interpretation of prophecy, the evangelical theme of conversionism is inescapable. Gaster was convinced he was living in pivotal times:

After some study of these revelations, I cannot but come to the conclusion already arrived at by the present state of the world and the history of the past, as by the concurrent testimony both of Christian and Mussulman tradition that we are witnessing the development of the events under the seventh and last vial, whose termination appears to be about A.D. 1866.²³⁷

Then, having put forward something of a conclusion, he traced back the reasoning for such an interpretation based on scripturally identifiable epochs. However, these epochs are not successive but concurrent, and trace back to 1260 days/years. In other words, using a parallel interpretation of the text, Gaster concurs on the first epoch that Gentiles would occupy the Holy Land, and on the second that some Jews would make a decision for Christ, acting as witnesses. Thirdly, the argument is made that the true church exists in some sort of wilderness state where it has been for somewhere near 1260 years and is yet to find her way back. The fourth symbolic structure represents the symbol of the beast, rising from the sea with seven heads and ten horns and accompanied by the Whore of Babylon which is Rome. Since Gaster believed the epochs were parallel, then the starting point of one would determine that of all the others. He argues for the Roman decree under the Greek Emperor Phocas of A.D. 606 establishing Papal Rome's supremacy and thus fixing the date for the start of the schema of four parallel epochs as 606 plus the 1260 years of Revelation as the

²³⁶ Gaster, Agra sermon, p. 7, 8.

²³⁷ Gaster, Agra sermon, p. 3. Gaster here departs from those like Conder who located the fall of the papacy in 1848, signaled by the flight of Pius IX. See Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons', pp. 220-222.

duration of her power, meaning that the church should expect an imminent downfall in the late 1860s.

Again, it must be stressed that though this view and dating schema appear arbitrary, it is not unique for the era. Gaster's sermon was intended to be easily referred to, and to provide hints for interpreting other prophetic passages. When placed alongside scholarly works of a similar era, such as the Lutheran theologian, Karl Auberlen's German, whose work was translated into English in 1856, it is almost identical in its analysis, hermeneutical custom and even key dates:

The forty-two months of the beast are consequently 1260 years, and begin with the start of the on the one side, and the edict of Phocas (606 A.D.) on the other, which acknowledged the pre-eminence of the Roman church. The false prophet is the papal clergy, who rendered and caused the people to render divine honour to the vicar of Christ. The harlot Babylon is Rome, ancient and modern. The fall of Rome refers not merely to the city, but includes, at least, the papal state, and a third of Christendom.²³⁸

That this attempt suffers from a slightly arbitrary approach to history, despite being popular, is also shown by contrasting Gaster's exposition with that provided by a *London Review* published in 1830, defending the Church of England from expositions offered by Protestant Dissenters in the capital, who had lambasted the Anglicans for still being part of the Papal system.²³⁹ This article demonstrates both the a normative approach to biblical epochs, as well as the propensity that these complex schema had to wildly differ. The anonymous writer also refers to the analysis of Rome given by Gibbon which Gaster uses, but fixes the 1260 days on Justinian's edict in 532, rather than Phocas' document of 606, meaning that the date of greatest significance coincides with the French Revolution in 1792 rather than the much later 1866.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ K. A. Auberlen, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelations of St. John, Viewed in Their Mutual Relation*, trans. by A Saphir (Edinburgh, 1856), pp. 380, 381. Auberlen was a Lutheran theologian from Basel, widely read, and commended by Charles Spurgeon: 'his spirit is reverential and his views are evangelical'. C. Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*, Volume 4, ref. 771.

²³⁹ Anon., 'The Church of England defended from the attacks of modern dissenters' (London, 1830) - being the substance of a review which appeared in *Morning Watch and Quarterly Journal on Prophecy*, VII (September 1830), pp. 25-27.

²⁴⁰ Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticae* (1871 abridged edition). Elliott's schema was obviously most problematic after 1866 when it was shown to have been an error, though he manfully countered this

This sermon also demonstrated that evangelical opposition to Rome and her influence was not claiming to be based on bigotry (though some may have been bigots regardless) but flowed out of a well-used interpretive framework tracing back hundreds of years:

Now be it observed there is no dispute among the expositors of fulfilled prophecy as to what is represented by this woman. The angel, Roman Catholic and Protestant expositors alike explain it to men, 'the city of Rome'.²⁴¹

Gaster is theoretically open to reading and assessing Catholic exposition but is clearly unconvinced and follows a standard Lutheran and Reformation approach, outlining his argument for identifying Rome as Papal: Rome has seven hills; Rome had seven forms of government which all fell before establishing the Papal Kingdom and Crown; Rome calls its doctrines 'mysteries' denying private judgement to men, because the doctrines of salvation are 'mysteries' of which she alone possesses the key. And Gaster's approach bears out Bosch's concluding affirmations.²⁴² Great military atrocities and cruelties are then catalogued of which Papal Rome can be identified as the chief protagonist, not least of which are the many Crusades and the terrors of the Inquisition. Papal Rome is the source of 'lying miracles' such as the blood of St Januarius liquefying at will in Naples and those of the appearance of the Virgin only two or three years previously in LaSalette and revealing secrets to the faithful. This is a formulaic and cumulative catalogue, by way of polemic rather than persuasion, and also contains errors. The French encounters were actually recorded in September 1846, thirteen years previously.

Gaster in his Agra sermon then cites various events around the world that gave cause for hope that the grip of Babylon may be loosening over the following years. The waning of Turkish power was a sign; so too the growing political power and yearning

with a postscript to later editions written in 1868.

²⁴¹ Gaster, Agra sermon, p. 5, 6.

²⁴² M. Wheeler traces the antipathy of Roman and Protestant cultures very ably in *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (Cambridge, 2006), including the rise of pamphlets published by *British Protestant* from 1846-1864 and designed to counter growing High Church tendencies within the Church of England, p. 164.

of the Jewish people to have a land of their own, and added to this something extraordinary was happening in the global evangelical mission movement:

...already has God begun to pour out His Spirit largely, as in America and England at this time; many men are devoting themselves to Mission work from the Universities; 15 having come forward almost together. 40 young men are also preparing for our own society in London alone; and the other Protestant Societies are similarly blessed.²⁴³

He was most probably referring to the establishment of the first CMS association in a university context. Gaster's millennial expectations are looking for positive points of contact in world events in the church, and wherever the missions movement started to grow he took this as signs of God's favour and action. But it is interesting that in this earlier phase of Gaster's ministry he is not able to point to examples of God's action within the ministry in India, but rather to ecumenical prayer meetings in the United States.

The Islamic sense was that something might happen in five or six years' time also, which combined with Scripture, history and contemporary politics gave Gaster and his generation a sense of expectancy for the growth of the church throughout the world, and especially success to the missionary project. He tinged this with evangelistic height and with an appeal to his hearers, stressing immediacy and immanence. The final pages of the text, by way of footnotes and explanatory sentences are verbatim references to the Islamic expectation, mostly gleaned from the *Friend of India* on 16 June 1859 and letters to the *Delhi Gazette* from 20 August 1859. Though interesting, these are not to be understood as first-hand references from conversations that Gaster had enjoyed with Indian Muslims, but were reflections on letters in local journals and newspapers. At this stage in his development, Gaster shows more than a surface knowledge of Islam, but does not make a distinction between Shia and Sunni Islam in his comments. All the references are, in fact, Shia in origin, with hopes that the 'Imam Mehdi' would be revealed in the next five years or

²⁴³ Gaster, Agra sermon, p. 7.

so. This is significant, for it shows that Gaster, as a CMS missionary, has a sympathetic but shallow view of Islam in India, viewing it as having some revelatory power, though without salvific potency. All Muslims and Hindus were still essentially lost heathens who needed to hear the gospel and ‘flee to Jesus’, but they got a hearing, and were listened to with interest. This, in direct contrast to the so-called ‘lying visions’ given within Roman Catholic spirituality which have nothing to say to true and biblical Christians.²⁴⁴ To CMS missionaries, Muslims are seen with sympathy, and without wild eschatological perspective, as those who need to have access to Scripture and to the gospel, and are not in any way viewed as a threat or a danger.²⁴⁵ This approach to Islam has ancient evangelical roots, even seen in the teaching of Wycliffe, Lollardy, Hussites and Luther.²⁴⁶

Gaster’s hermeneutic and systematic theology are idiosyncratic, at times chiming with many other literalist readings common amongst other Reformed interpreters, but at other times formulaic and inconsistent, open to the charges of anti-Catholic bigotry dressed up as exposition. Regarding other religious communities, a Shiite expectation of the Imam Mehdi was given more interpretive weight than an appearance of the Virgin Mary. Though Gaster could see the decline of the Turks in the Ottoman Empire as a positive step, his eager expectation is rather for the fall of the Papal Counterfeit, whose decline would usher in a new season for the True Church to be revealed. The Babylonian Beast was not in the threatening from the East but in lurking in apparently Christianised Western civilisation. The paradigm of the missionary Gaster had missionary heroes and Romanising villains, a titanic and global battle between the guardians of the Gospel and the corrupting religious representatives of a counterfeit church. This was placed within the providence of God whose power stretched out through history and the nations of the world. This mythic Protestant missionary narrative worldview had a resonating and identity-forming and identity-building function.

²⁴⁴ T. S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, 2009), p. 1-3, make it clear that evangelicals were aware of Islam, and used Muslims in rhetorical devices, but few had direct relationship with Muslims, pp. 166-167.

²⁴⁵ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, pp. 213, 230.

²⁴⁶ F. Orr-Ewing and A. Orr-Ewing, *Holy Warriors* (Carlisle, 2002), pp. 91-97.

This surely is the inconvenient truth, Gaster's exposition is formulaic, his exegesis flawed, his identification of Catholicism as the great enemy appears difficult to defend either biblically or with reference to his own social context, and his engagement with Islam and Hinduism, despite living and preaching in Agra, is dependent on newspaper cuttings and journalism rather than face to face relationship or academic study. The sermon has little to commend it theologically to a contemporary congregation save some vibrancy in communication and the motive of equipping hearers to interpret Scripture for themselves. But in approaching the text in this way, Gaster sits squarely within the evangelical tradition, using interpretive frameworks common to Anglicans and nonconformists.

Contemporary British evangelicalism has mutated or evolved, depending on one's stance, and has largely moved away from both the interpretive approach to Scripture evidenced in the Agra sermon, especially in its understanding of Roman Catholicism.²⁴⁷ The historical chill which has lasted several hundred years has thawed in many areas, and the rise of the charismatic movement within both Catholicism and evangelicalism has fostered greater common ground and relationships. The vital lesson for historical study at least for contemporary evangelicals is therefore to recognise the reality of the previous breach, whilst at the same time evidencing the progression of thought within evangelicalism itself. The adaptive elements that Bosch identified in the transforming mission also apply to transforming theology and interpretation. Gaster's depiction of Catholicism is largely a formula – there is nothing to suggest that he had meaningful relationships with Roman Catholic believers, or that he was in any way responding to competition.²⁴⁸

Gaster was by no means alone in reserving his most pertinent attentions to the Romanising tendencies within the Established Church as opposed to the actuality of the Roman Catholic church as an institution.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ M. Noll, 'The History of an Encounter: Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals' in C. Colson and R. J. Neuhaus (eds.), *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (Dallas, 1995), pp. 81-114; Also M. Noll, 'American Evangelical Christianity', pp. 111-147 in the same book.

²⁴⁸ Wheeler, *The Old Enemies*, ably explores the use of motifs during the Gorham crisis, pp. 187-197.

²⁴⁹ G. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850* (Eugene, 2001), p. 312ff.

As he moved back to London it would be the creeping influence of the Oxford movement and Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England which would evince the strongest cry of protest and gave him a battling approach to ministry and mission.²⁵⁰ However, Gaster was well able to step outside his natural reservations in order to bring the right to read God's revelation to people of all backgrounds, and all literacy levels. Whatever his flaws in interpretation, he worked hard to ensure as many as possible to access their own Scriptures and make their own interpretive mind up. Gaster's Agra street stall was specifically set up to meet this need and he was encouraged by the rate at which this hunger was met — portions of the New Testament disappearing at several per minute over a few hours. His conviction that they needed saving through the gospel did not lead to condescension or fear, but rather to action, leadership and social transformation.

The Indian phase of Gaster's ministry was one of leadership formation, through hardship, conflict and misunderstanding as well as marked by success in ministry. Though his prose is potent and at times confrontational, he appears to be a cheerful and likeable leader for people from several backgrounds, and an excellent pioneer — founding two schools and a sanatorium as well as fulfilling multiple preaching engagements and some fruit in terms of conversions. Leadership formation was not in institutional loyalty but in activist leadership with a workforce motivated by voluntarism, and leadership which valued conviction and confrontation.

As to activism, only seven months after moving to Agra, Thomas began to show some of his potential. His arrival in the town came still only a few months after the mutiny of 1857 that had unsettled the region and disrupted much of the nascent work of the CMS through looting and destruction of property. However, Gaster wrote little of the political climate of the region, focussing instead on daily missionary work, demands, successes and failures. The following year Thomas described his health and ministry in the context of the providence of God:

²⁵⁰ Contra Bayly, *Birth*, p. 330, which suggests it was rather members of the Roman Catholic community who adopted practices and approaches from the evangelicals: 'Roman Catholicism was forced to reevaluate its doctrines and practices in the early nineteenth century in reaction to the growing secular power of Protestants and their imperialist evangelization.'

I think you will join with me in thanking God for the blessing which is resting on my work in Agra. My health was not very good until March last, when God in his mercy afflicted me with the small pox and after my strength had been very much pulled down, it pleased our Heavenly Father to restore me to health, and give me a measure of strength which I had never before enjoyed. I have thus been enabled to work harder for my Heavenly Master during the hot season, than I was able to do in the winter months: for from June 1st to July 10th I have preached, taught, held Bible classes, taught enquirers - and so on, 35 times, besides studying both Urdu and Hindi, keeping up correspondence etc.²⁵¹

The London Committee did not expect immediate results, and were keen that missionaries spent time in language study throughout their tenure, and especially in the early years.²⁵²

Gaster is an active, even tireless, leader, able and willing to endure hardship for the sake of the work. He has a strong ethic of achievement and is looking for results personally, and in wanting to report back to his supporters that their charitable giving has not been in vain. The ministry is described as 'work' requiring effort, sacrifice and administrative skills.

This level of exertion, determination and drive was not out of the ordinary, especially amongst those of the Calvinist tradition. As Bebbington states: 'Zeal for souls was a constant spur to action.'²⁵³ Laymen were described as a form of praise as being a 'Christian Worker', and even more was expected of a minister. Charles Bridges wrote a pastoral handbook for evangelical clergy in 1830:

The general view of the principles of the pastoral work will show at once its laboriousness, and its importance. To acquaint ourselves with

²⁵¹ T. J. Gaster, letter to London Committee, 12 July 1859.

²⁵² E. Stock, *History of the CMS*, pp. 186-191, on the importance of language study and the ministry of Shackell in Agra: 'A brilliant Cambridge man who had been sent out expressly for work among the educated Hindus and Mohamamdans' and who after working at St John's Agra went to pioneer new evangelism amongst the hill tribes and died in 1873.

²⁵³ Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 40.

the various wants of our people; to win their affections; to give a seasonable warning, encouragement, instruction, or consolation; to identify ourselves with their spiritual interests, in the temper of Christian sympathy, and under a sense of Ministerial obligation; to do this with the constancy, seriousness, and fervid energy which the matter requires, is indeed a work of industry, patience and self-denial.²⁵⁴

Activism was therefore expected in leaders and missionaries to greater extent than in an average churchgoer, by way of industrious example. There is little evidence of exhortations to 'work-life balance' or 'sustainable lifestyle', in fact to the contrary, a man who has worked 'quite beyond his strength' is held up for commendation. It is therefore to be expected that illness and sickness, so often part of the struggle of an Englishman working abroad in missionary capacity, should be described and noted — for it necessitated the slowing of activity, the delay of success. To say that sickness amounted to failure would be to go beyond the evidence, where, by contrast, the strong belief in Providence meant that the hand of God might be discerned in sickness as well as in success.

The second area of leadership which defined his ministry was that of leading within and from the voluntary system whilst remaining a part of the parochial model and the established church. Gaster was a great believer in the 'voluntary system'.²⁵⁵ This had a basis in business and society as well as in theology. The theological underpinning for the 'voluntary system' lay in the Reformation doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers' which most Anglican Evangelicals maintained regardless of whether they had been ordained. Anglican Evangelicals saw a Protestant church with 'presbyters' appointed as leaders, and of priesthood being a category of ministry belonging to the whole people of God in the post-incarnation era. The business underpinning for the practice was at least as important, and was a distinctive of Victorian society.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ C. Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*, 3rd edition (London, 1830), p. 477.

²⁵⁵ Voluntaryism is the principle and system by which energy, action and funding come freely and 'voluntarily', and is contrasted with taxation or tithes. It need not have connotation of enabling 'volunteers' to action, though they are, of course, closely related.

²⁵⁶ M. Gauvreau, 'The Empire of Evangelicalism: Varieties of Common Sense in Scotland, Canada, and the United States' in M. Noll *et al.* (eds.), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond* (Oxford, 1994), p. 220, remarks on the reshaping of institutions according to this principle in politics and society on both sides of the Atlantic.

On a society level, Dickey suggests that it was in fact the missionary associations established to promote the evangelistic cause which fuelled further interest in philanthropic societies:

This surge of associational effort to promote agreed evangelical causes and to manage the threats to established order, laid out an enduring pattern of techniques by which social endeavours among evangelicals would be promoted throughout the nineteenth century.²⁵⁷

But business too, provided a model that was readily adapted to meet the needs of missionaries, social entrepreneurs and churches. The eighteenth-century joint-stock company provided philanthropists with a system that allowed leadership to flourish with accountability in a manner differing from a traditional charity or grant-making body. Rather than deliver profits back to the stock-holders — now translated into 'subscribers' — the association, reliant often on tireless work from the secretary and treasurer, would report back at the annual meeting to demonstrate social or evangelistic benefit over the course of the year. In London, many of these societies held their annual meetings in Exeter Hall to much public acclaim.²⁵⁸ One obvious problem for the use of such a vehicle for Christian ministry and poverty relief was the biblical injunction to give alms in private, but evangelicals felt that they could not and should not wait for the state or bureaucratic processes to transform into effectiveness. The societies and associations were often 'opt-in' demanding little in terms of membership other than subscriptions, and focussing on specific aims and objectives.²⁵⁹

The extent to which Gaster was a convinced practitioner of voluntarism can be seen in India. First, the CMS was set up on this voluntary system, a self-motivated and in some ways self-appointed organisation designed to quickly approve and send missionaries across the world, until such time as the official bodies of church governance came on board. Secondly, Thomas Gaster was therefore reliant upon donors in England to support CMS in order that his modest funds could be maintained

²⁵⁷ B. Dickey, 'Evangelicals and Poverty' in Wolffe, *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780-1980* (London, 1995), p. 40.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 41. See also Noll, *America's God*, pp. 198, 199 for this same incidence in America.

²⁵⁹ Bebbington, *Holiness*, p. 42.

for living and ministry costs. His journals and quarterly reports therefore were accounts to the subscribers as a 'kingdom' return on their investments, a return measured in spiritual and social capital rather than in pecuniary terms. Thirdly, in Agra Gaster founded a school whose association body was made up of members from the church in Poplar, rather than reporting back into CMS as a subsidiary body. Poplar subscribers directly funded the work in India without having to go through any CMS committee or bureaucracy. Fourthly, it was a dynamic praxis-driven model based on an eagerness for results, with the flexibility to adapt to the needs of the mission field, whilst retaining a clear link between supporters on one side of the world and the beneficiaries on the other. Fifthly, Thomas believed that voluntary involvement in ministry fosters greater Christian commitment, and enables purer motives for service, which a more stable salaried approach might lose. He was extremely wary of employing people in these associations as a means to their conversion, especially in the Indian context. At one stage, he points out that many Christian missionaries and chaplains seems to be building up groups of native assistants ('immense army') in the work, though in his opinion the problems associated with paying enquirers: 'has led to, in my knowledge, great evils and I believe is fearfully detrimental to the interests of true religion'.²⁶⁰

Thomas Gaster also developed entrepreneurial and business start-up skills on the mission field which he and others would put to quick use in London as the era of new parochialism was to begin in the closing years of the century. Despite formal training in theology and language, the skills Thomas developed in Agra were varied. The job of setting up a school involved negotiating with landowners, employing staff, training and teaching himself, as well as handling all the finances for the new work and institution. He also needed to arrange supporters in London, communicate with them, and with the London and Calcutta committees. At the same time he needed to preach, teach and pastor several differing congregations from different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds and in more than one language.

The initiator of start-up ministry was used to getting the job done and not waiting for someone else to do it, securing the advice and backing of individuals of influence, and moving from idea to reality in a matter of weeks. Bebbington goes as far as to make

²⁶⁰ T. J. Gaster, letter to CMS London Committee, 5 October 1860.

this thoroughgoing pragmatism a characteristic of the enlightenment which had been enthusiastically endorsed and adopted by the Calvinist evangelicals, especially of the missionary sort.²⁶¹ This affected both churchmanship and church order issues as well as missiology, where fixed denominational processes gave way to maximum efficiency and achievement in ministry. This mushrooming of dynamic business-modelled societies gave way to the need for entrepreneurial leadership both at home and abroad of which Gaster was as much a product as a protagonist.

Pitfalls of Missionary Voluntarism.

Missionary voluntarism, in many ways the dominant operating system of evangelical missionary agencies in general and the CMS in particular, also had its pitfalls and critics. Financial troubles could easily plague missionaries and their families, and this was the case in a situation which unfolded for the Gaster family. In the second half of 1859, while the missionary work continued in Agra, health problems for Thomas and Mrs Gaster also lingered, and resulted in debt and cash-flow problems, which in turn resulted in criticism again from Mr Cuthbert of the Calcutta Committee, who accused him of having family spending out of control, and who had begun to take steps to reign him in. Gaster felt he must explain to the London Committee the state of his affairs.²⁶² Despite the voluntarism of missions such as CMS in London, and the prevalence of associational subscriber-based dynamic models of support, it is evident that the self-generated entrepreneurial leadership style of that Thomas exercised, was not without its detractors in the local decision-making body of the Calcutta Committee, and when Gaster went over budget, action was taken. There was clearly a clash of operating cultures between the young missionary fresh from London's dynamism and the confidence of Poplar with the apparently more cautious secretary, Mr Cuthbert. Gaster admits to the London committee that he is £70 in debt, almost wholly because of expensive dental bills for his wife who has been in extreme pain and dogged by serious illness, and the debt in no way is a result of extravagance either personally or in the work of ministry and mission which he is overseeing. For Gaster results are everything — if the ministry has flourished and grown, this justifies

²⁶¹ Bebbington, *Holiness*, p. 42.

²⁶² T. J. Gaster, letter to London Committee, 15 March 1860.

the decisions taken and the way of operating. He owed his ability to prosper the work to his freedom of action. Nevertheless, in order to clear the debt he prepared and published some sermons for sale which had raised £14.²⁶³

In Gaster's opinion, the obstruction from Mr Cuthbert had reached a crisis point and so in May 1860 Gaster resigned, writing to London:

Gentlemen, It is with deep sorrow I am obliged to announce to you that I have after careful and long consideration been compelled to come to the conclusion to dissolve my connection with the Church Missionary Society, requesting only that they will enable me and my family to proceed to England.²⁶⁴

Mr Cuthbert had refused to allow Gaster to draw any funds for the work in Agra, denied his recent expenses claim, and passed a specific resolution in the Calcutta Corresponding Committee against Gaster, demanding that all money be passed through the Committee direct.²⁶⁵ They considered his explanation of debt and outgoings for doctors' bills 'not satisfactory'. The withdrawal of Gaster's autonomy and stripping of his rights made him consider that this distraction is so fundamental as to render his position untenable. Rather than work under these conditions he wished to return to London, a suggestion he hinted at the close of his previous letter. He also cites: 'the increasing ill health of my wife and eldest boy.' This letter is marked out by two elements that tell us something of his character. Firstly, the special resolution regarding his expenses claims and operating costs suggested to Gaster that, 'I was not to be depended on for common honesty'. This slur to his character was one that he felt unable to allow to stand, especially in view of what he and his family had endured in terms of privation and sickness. Secondly, he cites Mrs Gaster's full agreement concerning the unacceptable slander. This is the only point in the correspondence in which she features as a protagonist, which therefore makes the reference more pertinent. Later in life Gaster describes her as 'a curate to me'²⁶⁶ so it would be

²⁶³ This is the sermon already discussed: 'Hints on the study of Prophecy. A sermon preached in the church of St Paul's Agra. June 26, 1859'.

²⁶⁴ T. J. Gaster, letter, 15 May 1860.

²⁶⁵ Cuthbert was well thought of in London for his work in Calcutta. The accounting to London of Rev. G. G. Cuthbert is in CMS Archive C.1.1.M11, the Mission Book, 1847-1849; and CMS Archives C.1.1.M12, M13, M14, M15, M16.

²⁶⁶ South London Press, 6 August 1881.

wrong to assume her role was confined to the area of childcare – it is clear that she has had enough.

He ended with a final explanation which makes it clear he was still open to a solution that would clear his name and enable him to continue the work:

I shall be happy to answer any questions the parent Committee may wish to ask, *personally*, and I can only express my deep sorrow, that after working beyond my strength and enduring illness as well as seeing my family ill, I should have been so unjustly treated by a Committee which publicly professes to relieve the minds of its missionaries from all unnecessary distractions from their work of preaching the Gospel. As to the nature and amount of the work I have done in India I can shew my journals etc etc.

He then lists a number of witnesses in Agra, including the military authorities and the chaplain. Although there is no record of the letter from the London Committee, it was obviously delivered post haste, for within two months Gaster was replying, thanking the London Committee for their understanding and trust in him and his work, and rescinding his resignation.²⁶⁷

Illness was another great hurdle to the progress of the work. His bout of smallpox as 'afflicted by the mercy of God' indicates his sense of the active providence of God, which allowed him to perceive God's sovereignty in suffering, as well as in obvious favour. We can observe from the severity of the suffering they endured that this is not a simple turn of phrase, but a serious theological framework, and one that would remain with him until the end of his ministry in London. In July 1860 his wife and son both fell ill, which prompted Gaster to suggest sending Frank home to live with his parents in Poplar. He also reported on the mission work in Agra, which perhaps unsurprisingly, given the illness in the family, had not experienced such success, despite the excellent and tireless work of some colleagues:

Our mission in Agra is certainly not so flourishing as it might be...
Shackell works himself above his strength and is the most loving,

²⁶⁷ T. J. Gaster, letter to CMS London Committee, 15 July 1860.

zealous and prayerful fellow-labourer I ever met... Clinton works with the chaplain.²⁶⁸

The costs associated with sending his son Frank back to England were deemed prohibitive, and the poor health of his wife also made such travel impossible. The precise nature of her illness, after the dentist bills of the previous months is not cited, but he encloses a letter to his parents in Poplar explaining to them the change of plan. Sadly, though his wife recovered a little, his eldest son Frank did not make it past the next few months, and died.²⁶⁹

His relationship with the Calcutta Committee became strained once again, and in a letter of 17 July 1861, he once again threatened to resign, and from this period began to write to the London office frequently. He included further testimonies and references in defence of his working practices, which he bases on a lack of extravagance and moreover on the effectiveness of his ministry, and the personal costs they have borne: 'I have spent my wealth and my comfort, and have lost a child during my work.' Calcutta had again begun blocking his funds even though:

...they know full well it is impossible for me to work on as a missionary and at the same time be starved by a religious Society in Calcutta... for the Calcutta and London Committees are especially different from each other in their treatment of God's servants.²⁷⁰

The theme of personal cost and illness, being opposed and misunderstood by British compatriots in India, whilst being understood and supported by London and experiencing remarkable success in the actual work of mission in both Agra and Simla is striking. The last remaining letters for Simla are tinged with an undertone of exasperation at the organisational reluctance of the Calcutta Committee to support his work in Agra, and he felt the need to defend his ministry based on evidence to the London Committee. Missionary work for CMS missionaries very often involved significant hardship, sickness and suffering, and the Calcutta Committee were also at

²⁶⁸ T. J. Gaster, letter to CMS London Committee, 5 October 1860.

²⁶⁹ T. J. Gaster, letter to CMS London Committee, 5 November 1860.

²⁷⁰ T. J. Gaster, letter, 17 July 1861.

great pains to secure a sound reputation with imperial powers in India, given the twin pressures of the East India Company and the recent mutiny. The Indian context for CMS was somewhat unique, having been established with a powerful local correspondence committee in Calcutta almost from the outset. This was designed to speed decisions, but had the unintended consequence of allowing for mixed signals. This does perhaps explain something of the tension that existed between different arms of the organisation, a reality even experienced by Rhenius one of the first CMS missionaries who suffered misunderstandings with the local committees after having been recruited in London.²⁷¹ The CMS archives demonstrate many more direct communications from North Indian CMS missionaries to the London Committee, from 1857- 1862, and the desire of the London Committee to be more directly involved following the extra scrutiny the missionaries were subjected to and several health problems amongst missionaries. It may be perceived that the very qualities of independence and autonomy that qualified him for founding, establishing and developing growing works of mission in post-mutiny India, also made him susceptible to conflict within his own society, which made him better suited to London than politically charged India.²⁷² Thomas Gaster, as a young missionary, displayed certain leadership gifts and qualities, exemplified by activism, voluntarism, entrepreneurship and occasional conflict. It is clear that this combination of qualities and skills are carried through into his London ministry, along with a settled conviction that he is essentially a pioneer, who can only work well in an environment that allows him to operate in this manner. He was not just someone who could establish institutions, he also maintained the importance of preaching, the nurture of spiritual life and a vision for the transformation of society. In London he would apply these principles of missional leadership to the task of congregational leadership with unusually impactful effect.

²⁷¹ E. Chatterton, *A History of the Church of England in India since the Early Days of the East India Company* (London, 1924), documents several tensions. See also J.C.B. Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India* (Delhi, 1976), p. 234. Henry Venn is explicit in explaining to the gathering of Missionaries that the specifics of missionary engagement in India were under intense scrutiny. Venn had a detailed grasp of the issues involved despite being in London. Shenk, *Henry Venn*, p. 132-133, cites H Venn, 'Instructions to Missionaries September 28th 1860': 'In India, society yet heaves under the recent terrible catastrophe, and questions have been lately raised, in respect of the civil rights of Christian converts, of the system of ryotry (sic.) in the cultivation of indigo, of the Christian action of Government, and of its officers – in which the missionary may be more or less necessarily involved.' Ibid., p. 131. During a similar time Venn overrode the local considerations of the Calcutta Committee and the Bishop of Calcutta over a potential school reorganisation involving CMS in 1859. Ibid., p. 54.

²⁷² CMS Archives. C I 1 M 14 : Mission Book, 1855-1858; C I 1 M 15: Mission Book, 1858-1861; C I 1 M 16: Mission Book, 1861-1862.

Gaster and the Worship of God

Bebbington's quadrilateral places crucicentrism as a defining feature of evangelical worship and theology. During the time that Gaster was in India we observe, that while his theology places supreme importance on the work of Christ on the cross, the regular pattern of worship was fluid and personal, institutionally light, enthusiastic and ecumenical. As early as July 1859, he began a weekly open prayer meeting in Agra, perhaps inspired by the contemporaneous revival in Ulster and elsewhere. Even though Gaster was an ordained minister in the Anglican Church, licensed in India and London, it was the prayer meetings which fuelled his greatest enthusiasm, and he was at pains to set them up. Here too, was his moment of encounter both with God and with those who shared his outlook upon the world, and the locus of firm friendships. This was also the location for discipleship and nurture of committed Christians, much more so than the Sunday worship. Furthermore, this feature of evangelicalism was open to many, and had no formal liturgy, allowing it to be accessible to people from various different Christian backgrounds. The purpose of the prayer meeting was 'for the especial purpose of asking God to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh'.²⁷³ Much detail is given in his letters about how and when a specific room was secured, and by the time of writing 40 to 50 people were in regular attendance on Friday evenings. Were meetings for the 'especial purpose of asking God to pour out his Spirit on all flesh' a common theme? There are indications that they were, for this was the era of the renewal and revival often called the Great Awakening, which was having an effect all over the English-speaking world, sweeping through the United States and England. Such a prayer meeting, recalling Joel 2 and Pentecost, eagerly asking God to move in a similar way in the current generation, was not totally uncharacteristic for an evangelical missionary, though perhaps could have been more unusual amongst the chaplains posted to India. In this respect, Gaster was a respector of the tradition of the Evangelical Revival, a member of the evangelical tradition, and the Keswick spirituality that followed soon on its heels.

²⁷³ T. J. Gaster, letter, 12 July 1859.

In his extant Agra sermon from about the same time, he comments on these spiritually alive prayer meetings being signs of life in otherwise moribund churches.

This prayer group included 'Baptists, 'English-speaking natives', men of high rank in the army, East Indians and 'many ladies'.²⁷⁴ Thus we can see a diverse group, distinguished probably by 'English-speaking' and a certain level of education, but by the norms of the day quite startling in ecumenical flavour and the overcoming of class and caste. However, though Gaster, as a missionary, was committed to the proclamation of the gospel in different languages, and had studied in order to preach in the vernacular, it is clear that his greatest affinity remained amongst the employees of the East India company, English-speakers and Anglophile Indians. Gaster was clearly pleased with the meeting across denominational barriers, which occurred as an outworking of prayer. In so doing he was following the CMS values which, since its inception, had affirmed union across denominational lines both in theory and in practise. The original rules of the society, in Society Law XX, read: 'A friendly intercourse shall be maintained with other Protestant Societies engaged in the same benevolent design of propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'²⁷⁵

Though an Anglican, as a deeply evangelical clergyman and missionary, the specific denominational edge to his ministry was not emphasised. The Gaster prayer meeting was open to all denominations, and backgrounds and nationalities, and this was frowned upon by others, though the chaplain supported him throughout. He was aware of the subject of dissent and non-conformity but maintained that such spirituality flourished only where the established church neglected their proper duty:

Another and smaller prayer meeting is carried on by some dissenters, and it will do good; but in Simla it has been satisfactorily established that 'where the clergy do their duty, the laity don't care a fig for dissent'.

He ends the letter of July 1859 by mentioning that he is planning to rest a little and requests prayer:

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ *Church Missionary Society Manual*, p. 13.

I ask both from you, and my dear Master Jesus, and the Whole Committee of the CMS to pray to God to strengthen me still in *body and soul*, that I spend and spend myself away to his glory.

If Bebbington is right, and activism is a feature of evangelicalism, then exhaustion may be a side effect. This theme of health, hard work and suffering, is demonstrated as part of Gaster's theology of worship, rather than a symptom of his work's orientation.

What is striking in Gaster's descriptions of worship and preaching opportunities was the flexibility of space. Perhaps the absence of discussion about Sunday worship, the hymns sung, the formal liturgy used is fundamentally revealing. The largely non-liturgical context of a prayer meeting belies Gaster's personal preference and the light emphasis on the sacraments. During the whole of his Indian missionary phase, the journals barely mention baptism, and never make mention of the Eucharist. This is not so much an argument from silence, but in the Indian phase of his ministry even discussions about ritualism and regalia are conspicuously absent from his discourse, journals and letters. There is nothing about the type of singing, prayers or hymn books used in either the prayer meetings, or in the 'native churches', though the Book of Common Prayer is to be expected in the established churches within the Diocese. The flexibility of worship in India on the mission field allowed Gaster to flourish in the pioneering circumstances of emerging London, unhampered by the limitations of licensed premises. In Peckham, Sunday worship would explicitly follow this pattern, beginning in a private home, moving to a school building, and only moving into a church building after seven years of vibrant congregational life.

Bosch makes it clear that two mandates, of the social and the spiritual imperatives of mission, were inseparable to those affected by the Evangelical Revival. One was a spiritual mandate, the other was social, with a commitment to the betterment of others: 'The evangelical commitment to social reform was a corollary of the enthusiasm for revival.' Bosch suggests that the dual mandate held firmly together until the rise of fundamentalism after 1900, when the 'shift towards the primacy of the

evangelistic mandate was discernible'.²⁷⁶ To Gaster, and his contemporaries in CMS in India, mission was a dual mandate activity — both evangelism and social action were both implicit and explicit. Especially in the field of education Gaster the CMS missionary would accompany evangelism with attention to the educational needs of indigenous Indians. The school he worked on would be opened especially to Hindu girls with the hope that they would themselves become Christians and also be able to read and write.²⁷⁷ Gaster is at pains to describe his furthering work in schools to the London CMS Committee: 'I have at last a Hindu girls school, and training school for *governesses* to be placed out in the villages, under my supervision.' Since the rebellion, there had been no Hindu girls' school in Agra, and several unsuccessful efforts were made to establish one:

I once thought I had quite succeeded, having found a room, a mistress to teach the girls, and (as I believed) girls to be taught. A day was found when all were to be assembled and I went, full of hope, only to find an empty room! At last I found a pundit who had pretended to help me in getting up the school. His countenance was as serene as a Hindu's countenance can be; and when I asked where the girls were, he simply replied that 'there was a marriage, and all of them had gone to it.' 'Where then,' said I, 'Is the school mistress?' He did not know, but sent a boy who pretended to look for her. A few minutes after the boy returned and said 'O! she is eating her khana' [?] I saw at once that the whole affair was a failure, so I left immediately.²⁷⁸

The process of setting up the school and supervising its progress seems from the tone of the letter to be part of his explicit job description as a missionary, and so the detailed description of the trials and eventual success of such a school were important for Thomas to demonstrate to his official employers and supporters in London that he was now achieving part of what he had been despatched to do. This emphasis on education and particularly the education of girls and women was a theme of

²⁷⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 403.

²⁷⁷ This pattern of mission work involving education but maintaining the primacy of evangelisation is also demonstrated in the methods of the Presbyterian missionaries. Webster, *The Christian Community*, pp. 131, 132, 135, 151.

²⁷⁸ T. J. Gaster, letter to London Committee, 12 July 1859.

evangelical missions.²⁷⁹ There is some correspondence concerning the former school for 'lower caste Hindu girls' regarding its governance and the reaction of the students to the Indian Mutiny in May 1857 supplied by Mr W Wright.²⁸⁰ It seems certain that the school ceased and Gaster was despatched to revive such a school.

With this as the backdrop of only a few months, Gaster in 1859 persevered and eventually succeeded:

I am worried that without a very sanguine temperament in India, there is little hope of success in establishing a girls school, I had another disappointment, but found that by the expertise of Mr Martins [?] the headmaster of the Government College and of a Pundit who teaches under him, a few girls had been assembled and were being taught in a suburb of Agra called 'Gokul-poorie [?]' The school was put under my care, and I resolved to try it for 6 weeks before asking the residents in Agra for funds.²⁸¹

He described the building (in a narrow lane connecting a dirty bazaar with an open road, oriental, built four-square with a courtyard and covered way in the middle), and then goes on describe to the tangible results:

Therefore to accompany me to the School, you would see 8 girls, from the age of six to twelve, sitting at the feet of the pundit, learning to read. The school has been established only two months, and two of the girls can read easy lessons already, and the rest know the alphabet. But perhaps the most important department is that for training governesses and incredible as it may seem, there are 5 young women from 15-20 years of age, four of whom read well, or receive books or tracts from Christian Colporteurs.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ S. S. Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good*, pp. 178-239, charts the place of educating and inculturating women in India.

²⁸⁰ W. Wright, letter to Secretary of CMS (CMS archive, Section 6, Part 2, North India).

²⁸¹ T. J. Gaster, letter, 12 July 1859.

²⁸² Ibid.

The school was to educate children to read and write, perhaps in English as well as in Hindi, as well as to ‘elevate’ them from their down-trodden estate in the lower castes. The CMS missionaries, it seems, were determined not to be complicit in the caste system as the colonial government had become, especially where native Christians belonged to the ‘unemployable lower caste’. It is interesting to note that Gaster felt comfortable with the distinctions of people into ‘caste’, though would utterly refute the idea that caste and position in life should somehow be fixed. Christian missionaries and Indian Christians have often been accused of failing to reach the whole of India by their association with the lower castes, ethnic peoples and ‘untouchables’, and it must be maintained that evangelical emphasis on such portions of society were motivated by honest motives.²⁸³

There is also evidence to suggest that the employment of indigenous Christians had become a serious, and even politically charged issue. A letter from Rev. A. Shawbridge to the CMS Committee discusses the admission of native Christians to public employment after the mutiny, and the effect that this may have on their discipleship:

I have not heard what are the views entertained by our Govt in Calcutta or in the North West but at Lahore there is evidently a bold profession of Christianity and a determination on the part of all holding the highest Civil Appointments — no longer to heed the claims of caste as such.

Here is a picture from Shawbridge of a not-yet released native church, reliant on the resources of the mission stations and the leadership of qualified missionaries sent from England to further the work. Therefore Indian Christians, employed by the mission stations, were especially important and often seen as conduits between cultures. They became part of an educated Indian elite and often assumed a leadership role within their Indian Christian Communities. Webster suggests that it was the natural tendency for many Indians to want to emulate social superiors, and this worried the missionaries in regards to those Indian Christians in government employ.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ Cash, *Missionary Church*, p. 52.

²⁸⁴ Webster, *Christian Community*, pp. 81, 82, 106.

The vision for Christian society generated by the evangelical CMS was not a society of surface Christianity and cultural conformity, which they resisted in India as vehemently as they did in London. Conversely, there were many in Government, both in India and in England who felt that the chief cause of unrest, and even the Mutiny itself, was the influence and progress of the evangelical missionaries seeking conversion amongst Hindus and Muslims. It is clear that in reply the CMS view developed more than ambivalence to Empire as it was worked out in local politics and policies:

The Evils we fear are 1st, a neglect of the means of grace, owing to their absence from a Mission Station; 2nd, adopting the evil practices of servants in Govt employ, especially the taking of bribes...²⁸⁵

To these CMS missionaries, the mission station was the locus of grace, and government employ a poor example of civilisation, a counterfeit christianity and a locus of evil. Despite the excellent evidence of Brown which points to a the pervasive effect of providence, especially in the period of direct rule by the crown which followed the Mutiny, it would be historical simplistic to wed providentialism to missionary triumphalism.²⁸⁶ To suggest that missionaries had an uncritical acceptance of exported British culture in India, is surely unjustifiable.²⁸⁷

Simla 1861

The second missionary placement when the Gasters moved into Simla gives occasion to examine another sense of the wide scope of the mission endeavour. This hill station may have been a compassionate posting for the summer due to his ill health, or a natural change of direction after a difficult end to his time in Agra. Gaster increasingly looked for personal transformation in the lives of the Europeans, at least in his reports back to the London Committee. Progress seen, especially in his

²⁸⁵ A. Shawbridge, letter to Secretary of CMS (CMS archive, Section 6, Part 2, North India, reels 30-33).

²⁸⁶ Brown, *Providence*, p. 200-201.

²⁸⁷ Porter, *Religion versus Empire*, pp. 163-181.

interpersonal relationships by the time he arrived in Simla, and his dedication to the work, even through extreme hardship and after language study, is admirable. Even following the death of a son, his own priorities for leadership included his personal pursuit of a strong and Christ-like character.

In 1850 the Tibetan Highway was started, the first lap of which came through Simla and the Anglican church was also constructed in the same year. Thus, by 1860, when the Gasters began their ministry in the town, with the road improved and widened, it was for the first time accessible by wheeled vehicles, and by 1864 had been declared the summer capital of British India. Simla (and Kotgurh, 54 miles from Simla) though remote, was not really a pioneering mission situation, having become the first CMS mission station in the Punjab, and unlike much of the Indian work of the CMS had the benefit of strong evangelical laity who offered significant financial support, the terms of which articulate the meeting of minds with the aims and intentions of CMS:²⁸⁸

From the first we were anxious to enter into the closest connexion with you. We are anxious to secure not only the permanence and enlargement of the Mission, but the acknowledgment and continuance of decided evangelical views. We want to be clear on this subject; and desire, as far as in us lies, the prevention of any 'uncertain sound' of the Gospel trumpet. The blessing of God has hitherto accompanied you. You have been enabled to uphold and maintain the truth as it is in Jesus; and you have the means to undertake the important work which we have pointed out to you. We are persuaded that if you undertake the Himalaya Mission, our whole object, and more than that, will be gained.²⁸⁹

The Gasters made an immediate connection with these key supporters and found themselves amongst friends. Nevertheless, on his new placement, Gaster was to find

²⁸⁸ Clark, *Brief Account*, pp. 83-91.

²⁸⁹ These missions, like most others in the Punjab, owe their origin to the earnest zeal and effort of Christian laymen, who in a few years collected more than Rs. 15,000 for them. Mr Gorton alone subscribed Rs. 100 a month to the Himalaya mission; and at his death, in 1844, he bequeathed to the mission Rs. 22,000, which has since become Rs. 31,500, and is still called the 'Gorton Fund'. Clark, *Brief Account*, p. 83.

concrete evidence of opposition and slander amongst some English, as well as great enthusiasm from new converts and fellow evangelicals in that town. His writing style places this in stark contrast: 'Many are seeking the Lord, and will, I doubt not, find Him. The testimonies of enemies is very powerful.'²⁹⁰ The cross-denominational prayer meetings, for a long time the staple for the missionary spirituality began to have a decisive impact in the small town and community:

The lady correspondent of the Delhi Gazette has three times written in that paper doleful rails about 'the changed state' of Simla. 'No amusements, none - all life gone, and no gatherings except Mr Gaster's prayer meetings' ... 'One gentleman told an officer here 'he would like to kick me out of Simla'.²⁹¹

Some definite change amongst individuals seems to have affected the character of the town, which was, according to Gaster's report to the London Committee, being discussed by people of all backgrounds:

One lady told me she saw a letter saying 'we have no amusements now; the prayer meetings have deprived us of so many who once carried on such things. The tradespeople say there has been such a change among the non-official class as they have never known in Simla before.'²⁹²

Gaster started a small weekly congregation for the non-Europeans, to which fifteen came weekly which, by 1882, had reached 150.²⁹³ While in Simla he also established a 'native church' in a shop and preached there weekly. He hired a room in a more neutral space for his prayer meetings, eschewing the many church buildings and chapels that were available, and choosing rooms which set people at ease from different backgrounds and denominations.

²⁹⁰ T. J. Gaster, letter, 14 September 1861.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

A later missionary and philanthropist described the spiritual and political situation:

Simla is becoming more and more the place where the laws of India are made, and where plans are formed for the general administration of this great land. But not only is Simla the chief seat of the Indian Government, but it is also, as such, the constant residence of many of the best and the most influential friends of the Church Missionary Society in the country. It would seem as if in some respects Simla would afford the same advantages, and occupy the same position, in India, as regards the work of the Society, as London does to the Parent Society at home. It would be well for the interests of our Missionary work, if our Church Missionary Society were to take up a more defined position in Simla than it has yet done.²⁹⁴

For Gaster, the demand of Sabbath rest was clearly scriptural and had bearing upon all those who called themselves Christians, regardless of their station in life. Moreover he wanted to communicate that he, as God's servant and a missionary, did not show preferential treatment to the rich. The cessation of Sabbath trading was, for Gaster, a mark of social transformation, and a subject for rejoicing. In Simla he wrote:

At the same time I have openly rebuked open sinners without regard to their station in life, and have found such usually only the more respectful in consequence. Lord McKay (?) and another gentleman were building houses here on Sundays, and I preached against the iniquity from the pulpit of the Station Church, saying 'that I hoped it was the heathen and not Xians who were doing so'.²⁹⁵

This led to the immediate ceasing of the practice.

From Simla in a letter home in September 1861 he gave some reflections to the London Committee, where the energetic and joyful evangelism of Gaster was met with a warm response. Gaster was keen to demonstrate that a cross-section of

²⁹⁴ Clark, *Brief Account*, p. 91.

²⁹⁵ T. J. Gaster, letter, 14 September 1861. (sic.)

Simla, from the illiterate peasant to the highest and most influential, were not immune either to the grace of God or His moral standards:

In the meantime, I have offers of support from the most influential people, for my great object has been to prove that 'Religion does *not* make a man gloomy but *truly* happy,' and this in God's hands has been wonderfully blessed in alluring those who wanted a mere touch, to turn themselves altogether to Christ.²⁹⁶

He asked the Committee for an extra year in Simla to carry on the work, fearing once again for his wife's health if they were to return to the plains, and then to return to England the following year. If allowed to stay he thinks this will have a deep impact:

I believe the work for God will wonderfully spread here, and some 600 Europeans will return to all parts of N. India, many of them loving God and very many well inclined to missions and the work of Christ generally. The work amongst the natives also is most encouraging. I will also attend fully to Kolegush.²⁹⁷

Simla was a place of complex typology, both a pleasant fantasy of a mountainous parish and a city of sin.²⁹⁸ Perhaps at the time Gaster preached his Agra sermon he had little idea that his ministry would turn towards Europeans once more. His role in the mountaintop government retreat of Simla was to be placed in a transitory seat of power far above the heat and bustle of India's summer. Here a few thousand British directed the affairs of Imperial India in splendid surroundings, yet not in isolation:

Simla's image, as something of a cross between Olympus and an English enclave, rested, perhaps, on two suppositions. Firstly the ownership of private property in British hands, and secondly the migratory and functional nature of its Indian population, which even in

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ T. J. Gaster, letter, end of 1861.

²⁹⁸ Representing the hill station as a site of the picturesque is an early view of Simla from W. L. L. Scott, *Views in the Himalayas, Drawn on the Spot by Mrs. W. L. L. Scott* (London, 1852).

1898 accounted for 29,048 of the total summer population of 33,174.²⁹⁹

With the social whirl and recuperative function of an English spa town, and an increasingly secure grip on power following the 1857 rebellion, the hill stations served both their functions well. Neither of these functions seemed to be designed to include the flourishing of vibrant Christianity. Few historians of Empire who comment on the hill stations, or Simla in particular, speak of a small evangelical revival at the heart of one in the early 1860s.³⁰⁰ Kenny emphasises the power of buildings, class and culture within these hill stations; Kanwar speaks of Simla's military and organisational development, chiming with Gaster's descriptions of the early 1860s as being dominated by a rapacious housing boom.³⁰¹ Kennedy also describes this housing boom, with 60 houses built in only four years between 1866 and 1870. These houses were often landscaped mansions, a fantasy of English idyll on mountain retreat but in seclusion from Indian villagers and even wealthy Indian princes who bought houses to keep access to power and influence over the long summer months.³⁰²

There is no doubt that the English parish ideal, and the concrete symbolism that gave it form was evidenced in Simla, especially as the years progressed and that this was reinforced through the literature of authors such as Rudyard Kipling. Kanwar describes a bucolic ideal that followed in the next decades:

²⁹⁹ P. Kanwar, 'The Changing Profile of the Summer Capital of British India: Simla 1864-1947', *Modern Asian Studies*, 18 (2) (1984), pp. 215-236. Statistics from Report of the Simla Extension Committee 1898, Appendix B.

³⁰⁰ J. T. Kenny, 'Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority: The Symbolic Landscape of the British Hill Station in India', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85 (4) (December 1995), pp. 694-714; D. Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley, 1996); Frykenberg, 'Christian Missions', pp. 107-131.

³⁰¹ P. Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj* (Delhi, 1990); P. Kanwar, 'The Changing Image of Simla', *Urban History Association Occasional Papers*, Series 10 (1989).

³⁰² Kennedy, *Magic Mountains*, p. 92. The figures for Simla come from Punjab government, *Gazetteer of the Simla District, 1888-89* (Calcutta, n.d.), p. 108; W. H. Carey, *A Guide to Simla; With a Descriptive Account of the Neighbouring Sanitaria* (Calcutta, 1870), pp. 34-41; and *Report of the Simla Extension Committee, 1898* (Simla, 1898), list of houses accompanying Map 3. For Ootacamund see F. Price, *Ootacamund: A History* (Madras, 1908), appendix C; J. Ochterlony, *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of a Survey of the Neilgherry Mountains* (Madras, 1868), p. 51; and *The Visitors' Handbook of the Nilgiris: Compiled from Official Sources* (Madras, 1897), pp. 74-78. For Mussoorie, E. T. Atkinson, *The Himalayan Gazetteer* (1882; reprint, Delhi, 1973), p. 598. For Mahabaleshwar, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, 19: *Satara* (Bombay, 1885), p. 502; and *Mahabaleshwar Guide*, p. 12.

The building plots were about an acre each, the church was beautiful, architecturally reminiscent of English market towns, like the Disraeli-saturated Beaconsfield where social life and high government were able to mix in the summer months; and here genteel English women were able to walk around the town in large numbers, entertained and entertaining, in parties, balls and social engagements. It was no accident that the Lake District in Cumbria became popular at the same time... Hill stations, with their thickly wooded hills and swirling mist, afforded colonists an opportunity to build around themselves a replica of English life.³⁰³

Yet Gaster had a contrary vision. Working at the heart of Simla, he was following a plotline that moved in the other direction. He was welcomed by many, but also opposed by the those whose influence are here described. This is a forgotten current, a contrary set of subversive aspirations at work within the English-speaking community, under the leadership of Gaster. The wealthy were trying to build houses, but Gaster was trying to build legacy of transformed lives; Simla naturally wanted parties, Gaster encouraged prayer meetings.

Conclusion

The final piece of correspondence from India contains an astonishing self-description of his work and calling, based on deep reflections on his previous years' ministry. It brings together many of the themes of this study — his independent minded entrepreneurial leadership, sense of calling as a missionary, the aim of personal and community transformation, as well as his emphasis on worship and prayer meetings:

In London I entreat the Committee to give me ever so dirty and poor a district - in fact anything rather than a *curacy*. I have been fitted for independent action by God, and I am conscious that wherever I have been left to carry out a work in my own way God has blessed it in the most marked manner, owning all classes... and this year I have had 80-

³⁰³ P. Kanwar, 'Changing Profile', pp. 215-236.

100 at the weekly meeting for prayer... and even *The Gazette* says Simla is changed.³⁰⁴

Thomas Gaster, Victorian missionary to India, serving in Agra and Simla, displayed a contextualised evangelical missionary theology and practice. Gaster must be understood missiologically within a framework of impulses and intentions from the mission agency (CMS) to which he belonged. The theology and expectations of candidates selected by the Society confirm what Bosch suggests of the nineteenth century that: 'The Protestant missionary mood of the period was: pragmatic, purposeful, activist, impatient, self-confident, single-minded, triumphant.'³⁰⁵ And this statement is borne out in Thomas Gaster, who displayed such traits almost to the letter. Methodologically, Gaster practised mission with concurrent models with elements of inculturation, transformation, indigenisation, globalism and evangelism all playing their part. He reassessed his skills and experimented with multiple models, turning his attention more determinedly towards the English at the end of his posting in Simla. Gaster was praxis-driven, an activist leader in a climate of voluntarism who demonstrated himself capable in a variety of skills. The exercise of ministry and leadership was not without conflict and frustrations, especially with the local committee in Calcutta, whereas the London Committee of the CMS appeared to admire his work and approach.

In terms of hermeneutics, Gaster was decidedly evangelical in his respect for the reliability of Scripture, but tended to a literalist reformed hermeneutic. His exposition shows inconsistency and an unconvincing approach to Catholicism within a strongly providentialist framework and does as much to illustrate how much evangelicalism has become detached from some of the assumptions of common sense philosophy as it articulates continuity of intention in submitting the individual to the authority of the Word of God. He also undertook enthusiastic Scripture distribution, tireless preaching and Bible teaching throughout his stay in India.

With regard to worship, the missionary was fluid and flexible, not tied to a sanctuary mentality and found personal comfort in weekly prayer meetings, with a longing for

³⁰⁴ T. J. Gaster, letter, end of 1861.

³⁰⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 336.

the outpouring of the Spirit. He believed that prayer and close spiritual community would inspire personal and social regeneration. He readily turned to education which featured alongside more explicitly religious evangelising work, happily working towards the betterment of the poor, the transformation of public morals, and ideally committed to an entire spiritual revolution of the locale. For Gaster, the modest work in Simla filled him with sincere satisfaction and paved the way to a renewed and decidedly missionary call to respond to the requests of the English:

And as I feel driven to English work just because my countrymen constantly entreat me to work for them. I request the parent committee to bring me and my family home in about November 1862, and to provide me with work in London. I say 1862, because my dear wife's health is far from settled and I believe it would be wrong for her to travel this year — until the close of next year.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ T. J. Gaster, letter, end of 1861.

CHAPTER 2

Importing Mission:

Thomas Gaster in South London until 1866

A good story combines, plot, character development and an understanding of the interplay of personalities and circumstances. Within church history the story of a local congregation is extraordinarily rich. It is vitally important that any researcher discover what Clifford Geertz terms a ‘thick description’ of reality, history and culture. Geertz strongly counsels for maintaining the importance of a ‘semiotic approach’ which would enable the researcher to enter the conceptual world of those being studied:

The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is... to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them.³⁰⁸

In the case of this research, there will follow an attempt to take seriously the semiotic structure of a specific historic universe, and to attend to the significance of cultural and theological indicators for the missionary parochialism, for Thomas Gaster, and All Saints Peckham. [Fig. 2] A reading is called for which can respond to the nuances of theology, tradition, method and culture that existed within and from the world of both leader and congregation. Only then could we understand the tilts and emphases within urban evangelicalism and the flows of people and ideas through a complex world which is only partially accessible to contemporary analysis.

Geertz is equally clear that the place of theory is to provide a structure for analysis, a system for greater effectiveness of comparison, or a ‘vocabulary’ in which ‘what symbolic action has to say about itself can be expressed’. Therefore theory is to

³⁰⁸ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), p. 24.

enhance the distinctive voice of the subjects rather than mute them or allow them to become bland or generic. Can the meaning of certain symbolic indicators be known and communicated effectively in the midst of more sedentary discovery and analysis, such as recording and assessing primary and secondary texts? Visual and occasional data do populate this symbolic and conceptual world of Peckham Christianity, but the concept of narrative drives the historical assessment. This approach to studying congregations as living communities with history and story is exemplified by the London Diocese and Open University 'Building on History' project as well as by Dudley and Ammerman's manual for leading congregations through transition.³⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that despite the differing contexts of American and English urban contexts, the approach to storytelling and history in both these sources draws on multiple sources of symbol to generate a history, and both are generated with an expressed intention of refurnishing congregations for the future with the resources of their specific past, especially those birthed in the second half of the nineteenth century.³¹⁰

Our primary written text for the London era of Thomas J. Gaster's pioneering work in Peckham is a *Brief History of All Saints*, which he himself wrote to record the work of the parish, inform his contemporary congregation of its beginnings 30 years later, and also to raise funds for the continuing ministry and needs by selling the pamphlet. While this cannot be 'the narrative' of the church or congregation, it is nevertheless of paramount importance, somewhat like a birth narrative. Unlike the considered voice of an external narrator, the highly personal, almost autobiographical narrative tells us as much in style and plot of the conceptual world of the first generation and certainly of the founder, as does the information contained and communicated within. With respect to quantitative data, the account appears reliable, the qualitative side of the account also gives plot, personality and interplay of context and era — vital in any engaging narrative.

³⁰⁹ R. Chartres, Bishop of London writes: 'It is often said that "mission and ministry should be under girded with theology" but the understanding of what constitutes "theology" is frequently thin and a-historical.' [https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/BOH_booklet_Final.pdf p.3].

³¹⁰ C. S. Dudley and N. T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition* (San Francisco, 2002), pp. 59-104. Specifically constructed to help a church generate a timeline which 'are not intended to recall exactly what happened. Rather, they reflect the way history is remembered, and therefore ways that history continues to influence the present', and in this schema ancient history is considered to be pre-1945. p. 64.

The *Brief History* provides a story within a story, a controlling sub-narrative and a voice. It has the same narrator as the annual reports, some of which are extant, by which the incumbent assesses the ministry, life, health and aspirations of the church every year during the annual meeting and presentation of accounts. This voice draws together structural, financial and spiritual records and communicates them tellingly each year. To this strong voice of Gaster, replete with plot and sub-narrative, are then added the voices, comments and alternative histories of contemporaries and subsequent narrators, historians, commentators and congregation members. Then add the accounts of the local press, the messaging of architecture, symbol and image, and the contemporaneous conversations in Anglican theology and mission. These contribute to the narrative either in unison, harmony or discord. As Hopewell confirms with regard to the narrative of a single parish:

Narrative further reminds the researcher or observer of the limits of outside expertise; no matter how disciplined or detached, everyone is formed by corporate experience and dependent upon storied discourse for the sharing of meaning. Learning the parts and presentations of parish story, then, is a way of reasserting the lived nature of social experience.³¹¹

Similarities of narrative approach can also be found in other historians of Christianity and evangelicalism. MacCulloch considers the story and history to be a thematic interplay and ideal for accurate history. His study begins by introducing the 'dramatis personae' and uses the theme of Josiah as motif or 'nomen' for an examination of the reforming era of King Edward's Tudor reign, arguing that motifs of Josiah and Solomon played an important role in contemporary self-understanding and in the intentions of several major players in the drama.³¹² He adds:

...such histrionics embarrassed the later readers of English established religion, so the play of King Edward has constantly been rewritten to

³¹¹ Hopewell, *Congregation*, p. 51.

³¹² D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London, 1999), p. 57f; 105f.

make more sense of its unlikely sequels. We must now try to see the original shape of the drama, as well as seeing how it was rescripted to suit later needs.³¹³

Unlike Hopewell, who examines churches with an eye for mythic resonances in classical literature, MacCulloch argues that scripture provided the narrative tropes for the earlier reforming Protestants, and suggests that contemporary historians are able to better analyse historical church cultures by engaging with the biblical motifs and narrative frameworks which were in use:

The dramas of the Edwardian reformations were biblical in more ways than one. The rebuilt Church was evangelical in essence. The assignment for evangelicals was a treasure hunt for the evangelion, the good news to be found in the New Testament, and the excavators were impatient with the centuries of church experience which overlay it. Yet spokesmen for the Edwardian revolution were also drawn to the Old Testament, where they could view other kingdoms battling against great odds to hear the message of God.³¹⁴

For All Saints Peckham there was a Josiah trope also, which echoed this biblical story, where the older laws and principles on which a community had been founded, had become lost and neglected. Without access to accurate history, false stories built up, rumours and half-truths about the life and heritage of a Christian congregation emerge which could be confronted with new historical data. A metal box, containing many of the original records, was retained, stuffed behind the choir stalls, in total disarray. All those to whom the collection of memorabilia pertained had left the area, the congregation or had died. As Josiah heard the unearthed law, so the current congregation have in recent years been allowed to reflect on the founder of the church, the intentions and the story of the place, through the live retelling of their birth story by this researcher, who also held the role of vicar.³¹⁵ And though a young vicar and a young king have little in common, the sense that history digested can both

³¹³ Ibid., p. 10.

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

³¹⁵ 2 Ki 22:8-13.

challenge and convict has profound resonance from this part of the narrative.

The Indian season of mission for T. J. Gaster sets the context for this era of metropolitan ministry and mission. During the few years of establishment in Camberwell and Clapham, the re-integration of mission practices with the new emerging urban context can be discerned. The matrix for analysis will be used once again to reveal the thick description of congregational theology and practice, with growing emphasis on story and leadership.

1863 — Camberwell Curacy

It was May, 1863, I returned from India after four month's residence at the Cape of Good Hope on the way home.³¹⁶

Thomas and Selina Gaster arrived in London with their family in 1863, seemingly less opposed to a dreaded and respectable 'curacy' that had marked his final recorded correspondence with London. He set about trying to find a job in the London he had left behind. Rather than relying upon the CMS to grant him a district position or a role with a theological college, he instead called upon an old friend. He wrote to Rev. Stephen Bridge, the incumbent of St Matthew's, Denmark Hill, and asked for a curacy. There were roles within CMS for returning missionaries upon occasion, but it was also a well-established pattern to consider an incumbency or parish post.³¹⁷

Brief History, the short commemorative narrative written to give a first-hand account of the early stages of the establishment of All Saints Church, is meticulous in certain details, especially with regard to dates, statistics and figures, and in this instance tallies with corroborating outside sources and documentary evidence in the London Metropolitan Archive, Lambeth Palace and other known data such as the founding of the church, and the dates for his induction. Thus, we can deduce that the success of the work in Simla convinced Gaster to stay for several more months than originally

³¹⁶ *Brief History*, p. 9.

³¹⁷ e.g. Rev. John Barton from CMS in India, who returned to pick up the incumbency of Holy Trinity Cambridge. See Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, p. 248; Williams, *Self-Governing Church*, pp. 120, 150.

indicated in his letters to the London Committee at the close of 1861. We pick up the narrative through Gaster's lens, rich in symbolism and the motifs of Protestantism, struggle and mission.

Rev. Bridge invited him to come to his area of London to start 'a second church' in the parish, but as this might take some time to organise, recommended that Thomas work with the Clapham-connected Rev. Robert Tapson, Curate in Charge of St Giles Camberwell, who needed a curate.³¹⁸ Gaster says he 'accepted at once' and he was licensed by the Bishop of Winchester, Dr Sumner, to the curacy, which he served for 11 months.

Once again the themes of his missionary evangelicalism are evidenced. Preaching was restored to prominence at St Giles with evident popularity, and Tapson and his wife were enthusiasts for evangelism and methodical mission work in the community. This turned out to be a fruitful partnership, and Gaster worked hard with and for Tapson, taking on the responsibility for laying gas into the 'great parish church', and an immense evening congregation very quickly developed under their care: 'Often fifty or sixty people [were] obliged to stand, although there were seats for 1,500.' This was a decidedly missionary and evangelical era for the church.³¹⁹

For the Evangelicals at the close of the nineteenth century, issues of worship, doctrine and liturgy were considered to be of great importance. A gulf was in the process of opening up within the Church of England, between low churchmanship and restored ritual. St Giles in the season under discussion was decidedly low-church in spirituality and outlook:

There was no choir; the Gown was worn by the preacher; all the parish charities were freed from debt... a restless High-church section (very small) was quieted or subdued, and the true work of the Lord Jesus Christ bore abundant fruit.³²⁰

³¹⁸ Rev. Robert Tapson of St Giles Camberwell married Emily Christiana Cox in 1862 also at Holy Trinity Clapham (*Gentlemen's Magazine and Quarterly Review* [July-Dec 1862], p. 95).

³¹⁹ The South London Church Survey of 1881 suggests this was a brief era, for 20 years later it is explicitly stated that there are no district visitors and no evangelical theology or mission strategy.

³²⁰ *Brief History*, p. 10.

This list of priorities has symbolic value as well as theological value, which according to Wellings, Hardman and Hylson-Smith represented a shorthand for the type of Evangelical Anglicanism to which Gaster belonged and considered authentic.³²¹ Gaster has revealed a great deal not only about the positive act of worship through what is affirmed, but also through what is being roundly rejected. To Gaster, and his fellow evangelicals, the absence of a choir was a symbol of the evidence of concerted and committed Christianity amongst every member of the congregation, and a guard, in Gaster's mind, against over professionalism of worship in true and lively religion. Having a choir, by contrast, was a sign of empty religiosity and the professionalisation of worship. Having a gown worn by the preacher was symbolic of evangelical doctrine and the importance of preaching and teaching the Bible, and an explicit denial of priestly or sacramental theology or practice by the clergymen. 'All the parish charities freed from debt' indicated a combination of good stewardship and was a sign that the congregation members were voluntarily contributing to the work of the parish and the care of the poor in the district. This was a sign of competent leadership and responsible and committed membership. These were markers of 'the true work of the Lord Jesus Christ' and accompanied 'abundant fruit', where 'fruit' implied explicit conversions, the renewing of personal devotion to Christ, and outreach in the community and the wider world. In stark opposition to all this stood High Church theology, practice and congregation members; whose views, in Gaster's opinion, were not to be tolerated, and whose priorities were to be rejected in their entirety; in other words 'quieted and subdued.' The relative smallness and weakness of this party within the congregation is to Gaster an indication of the spiritual health of the congregation during this season of ministry. He variously describes this other symbolic and theological reality as Papist, Romish, Ritualist or High Church.

Ecclesiastical Provision in Camberwell from 1851

During this era, local worship provision for the population was provided in a rich variety of venues, even including the Peckham police station which had a consecrated room used for worship on a Wednesday, Dulwich College Chapel and the chapel of

³²¹ E. B. Hardman, *The Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (PhD, 1964) and K. Hylson-Smith *Evangelicals in the Church of England* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp. 122-142. M. Wellings, *Evangelicals Embattled: Responses of Evangelicals in the Church of England to Ritualism, Darwinism and Theological Liberalism. 1890-1930* (Milton Keynes, 2003).

the Licensed Victuallers Asylum, where a congregation met weekly. Add to these Anglican expressions of church, several other places of worship, including large and successful congregations like Camden Chapel on Peckham High Street, a Huntingdon Connection church established in 1797 and Grove Chapel on Camberwell Grove which grew out of the Camden Chapel.³²² The Methodist life of Peckham was also strong, having been established with a small class in 1805, a chapel built in 1834 in Stafford Street, another in 1864 in Queens Road that seated 1000 and with further school rooms and buildings erected in 1875.³²³ Rye Lane Baptist Church was influential and remained so until the closing years of the twentieth century and there was a climate of Christianity which flourished especially in Nonconformity, alongside a fluid and slightly chaotic provision by the Church of England, which nevertheless rallied to the needs of the local area by subdividing parishes and building new churches swiftly across the region.³²⁴

Camberwell parish in 1851 was a geographically large parish of 4342 acres, and in 1801 was still rural with a population of only 7059. In the 1820s it was sub-divided into three administrative districts of Camberwell, Peckham and Dulwich.³²⁵ By 1820 that population had risen considerably as had the number of Protestant Dissenters according to the census: Camberwell 6970 (2000 dissenters), Peckham 5100 (2000 dissenters) and Dulwich 1480 (no dissenters!).³²⁶ So the church scene was complex and multi-layered, and easier to identify along confessional rather than denominational lines. The Evangelicals existed largely in Dissenting congregations, such as the Camden Chapel which had a weekly Sunday congregation of 2,300 meaning that though these were largely local churchgoers, parochialism in its traditional form was no longer the dominant ecclesial model.

³²² J. D. Beasley, *Peckham and Nunhead*.

³²³ J. D. Beasley, *Building Together*; J. D. Beasley, *The Bitter Cry Heard and Heeded*.

³²⁴ 'Assumptions about church decline have often presupposed a starting point of a previous religious "golden age". However, the reality is that churchgoing was never close to universal in the nineteenth century. Church planting in this period, despite its many successes, often lacked a strategic rationale, being driven by motives such as party conflict or the interests of landowners and property developers. Too many Anglican churches were built during this period – which may have contributed to ongoing problems, such as financial pressures, thinly-spread congregations and over-stretched clergy.' *Building on History Report*, p. 8.

³²⁵ J. D. Beasley, *Peckham in the C19th* (Unpublished essay, 1973), pp. 14, 57, 58, 78. J. Steele, *The Streets of London - The Booth Notebooks, South East* (London, 1997), pp. 203, 204.

³²⁶ *1851 Religious Census: Surrey* (Surrey Record Society, Guildford, 1997) ciii Camberwell registration district.

Under the oversight of the Tapsons, the evangelical approach to mission was renewed and was soon felt in parish pastoral care which was afforded the same attention to detail and hard work as it had in the field of foreign mission. As such a parish church with a 'healthy work' of 'spiritual benefit' to the area could be expressed practically. Gaster describes this as a ready shorthand which would have made much sense to the original evangelical readers of the *Brief History*, mentioning district visitors, a Sunday School, and a cottage service:

St Giles had under Tapson's care, district visitors, Sunday school, and a cottage service in Peckham. Mr and Mrs Tapson did all they could for the spiritual good of the vast parish committed to their care; and were rewarded by the support and gratitude of all lovers of the gospel...³²⁷

This short list is instructive, belying unfortunately both that this active engagement with the community was not the norm, but also what was to be expected and worked towards. District visitation was the method of dividing a parish into smaller districts, and then assigning members of the active congregation to pastoral care, poverty relief, discipleship and instruction. Sunday school was here meaning religious instruction primarily for adults and young people, and did not necessarily carry the connotation of children's work only, though it may have included such. The cottage service was probably a small congregation that met in a home or cottage in the semi-rural Peckham. The district visiting model for mission was exemplified by the city mission movement. One city missionary from South London expresses this best several years later when the home mission movement had reached maturity:

I am more than ever convinced that... the backbone of mission work is visit, visit; and then begin again and visit consecutively. With all our open air and Mission Hall work, marching and parading the streets and courts of my district, the only real, vital way to reach them is to visit them single-handed.³²⁸

³²⁷ *Brief History*, p.20. Green points out that this parish activism was not the preserve of evangelical clergy. See S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1-10.

³²⁸ J. Nicholls and I. Howat, *The Streets Paved with Gold: The Story of the London City Mission* (London, 2003), p. 91. From a missionary in 1898.

The large parishes were subdivided into districts, or micro-neighbourhoods, of only a few thousand residents, and the city missionary visited them with the view of sharing the gospel with them and enabling them to make a decision for Christ. This work tended to be concentrated on the poorer communities, and in times of great trial, such as the cholera epidemic of 1849 which ravaged London. 201 urban missionaries with London City Mission were working in these underprivileged regions of London when the disease struck and killed many thousands, and it is clear that the gospel-sharing work was accompanied by great compassion and political and social action to alleviate the causes as well as tend to those affected.³²⁹ The charge to missionaries of the Methodist mission in South London was: 'let them absolutely have nothing to do but work the mission from its centre, till the slums and alleys all around feel and acknowledge its power.'³³⁰ The visiting was methodical and well documented, although in many other ways self-motivated. The missionaries were expected to work tirelessly amongst the very poorest of London's communities and report back via journals once every few months to the overseers of the work and the organising committees of the mission.³³¹

The celebratory tone of this account should be modified with the caveat that district visiting, and the role of the city missions was sometimes experienced as a form of social control, enacted and funded by others as a specific response to theories of social degeneration. Cox points to this dynamic within Lambeth, and McLeod suggests that the emphasis on temperance turned ministry into moralism for the working classes. Hammond and Beasley are more forgiving, suggesting that rather than paternalism this district visiting was effective and holistic.³³² While it is undeniably true that the social regeneration aims and objectives of later parochial and nonconformist evangelicalism had clearer urban moral aims, in the earlier phase the intention was primarily soteriological.³³³

³²⁹ Ibid., pp. 14-19, 83.

³³⁰ Minutes of a meeting of the Committee of the London Wesleyan Methodist Mission held at Centenary Hall, 22 September 1885.

³³¹ Nicholls and Howat, *Streets Paved with Gold*, pp. 2-101, carries extracts of a city missionary journal. See also W. H. Wrintmore, *The Salvation of London* (London, 1968) and Beasley, *Bitter Cry*, p. 15.

³³² Cox, *The English Churches*, pp. 105-125; H. McLeod, *Religion and the Working Classes in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1984), p. 35; Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman*, p. 79; J. D. Beasley, *The Bitter Cry*, pp. 11-18; Hammond, *The Parson and the Victorian Parish*, pp. 132-151; McIlhiney, *Gentleman*, pp. 1-20.

³³³ Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*, pp. 38ff.

Whilst Gaster's tenure in Camberwell was brief, and he served only as a curate and not overall leader of the project, nonetheless a theme of conflict which had been discerned in the Indian phase of ministry came to the fore. Whilst the newer churches in the area were mostly fiercely evangelical, the parish church of St Giles was not accustomed to such enthusiasm and Gaster testifies in his unique style to the tensions which existed in the more establishment churches:

... and (as usual) they [Mr and Mrs Tapson] were opposed by a very small clique of very high, and very dry, and very bitter High-church people, who probably learned wisdom as they gained experience. Some of these people attacked me but by God's grace I soon put them down, and overthrew all their machinations.³³⁴

His robust treatment of detractors and their views shows something very important about leadership and conflict, which Gaster reveals as much in his method of telling the story as in the information shared. Detractors (minority, clique, bitter, dry, foolish) who 'attack' are 'restless' and have 'machinations' are to be 'put down', 'quietened', 'subdued' and eventually 'overcome'.

More will be said of this power and conflict dynamic during the ministry in Clapham, but at this stage the emotive language alone demonstrates a dualism, a fighting spirit and an energy based on certainty and conviction.³³⁵ Gaster, convinced of the moral and spiritual superiority of his missionary cause, had no patience for those with other priorities. This approach to leadership cannot be demonstrated here to be a universal feature of evangelical theology, but we can establish that it was particular to Gaster, so recently returned from several years in India. It is likely that it is these very qualities which inspired loyalty and confidence in some members whilst also provoking the more negative reactions in others.

Of note, also, is the dual leadership role of Mr and Mrs Tapson. Evangelical leaders in the region at the time included William and Catherine Booth, ministering in the Salvation Army only one or two miles from St Giles until the establishment of their

³³⁴ *Brief History*, p. 20.

³³⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 338.

Whitechapel base in 1865, and inspiring, through missionary-minded women, a new wave of visitors and Sunday school teachers.³³⁶ The image of the battle, discernible in Gaster's telling of the story in this instance, was brought into primary focus in the missionary evangelicalism of the Salvation Army.³³⁷ Gaster's articulation was mild in comparison to the rhetoric of the *War Cry*, whose first edition ran off the presses for Boxing Day 1879. The lead article began:

Why a weekly *War Cry*? Because The Salvation Army means more war... Because the cry of slaughtered millions rises up louder and louder to heaven, crying to our innocent souls with irresistible violence, to arise and fight more furiously than ever for the salvation of our fellows from the forces of evil which are dragging them drunken, befouled, degraded, wretched, down to an eternity of woe.³³⁸

The conviction that a spiritual battle was underway necessitated a change in perception of leadership. For the Booths, this pragmatic and theological articulation of church as an army on the move for mission was a radical ecclesiology which changed leadership, responsibility and public discourse, yet retained the activism and conversionism, biblicism and crucicentrism of more general evangelicalism. A church in war footing needed a military leader rather than the parson of peace time, a church in war time saw evangelism as a life and death business demanding all energy and commitment. In comparison to the Salvationists, the activism of Gaster was more modest, but it placed confrontation and conflict in a not entirely negative light. The urgency of the moment was brought into sharp relief by emotive preaching, powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit, of prayer for revival and explicit personal and societal transformation.

The revival of fortunes of St Giles, was, according to a survey of South London churches in 1881, rather short-lived. The anonymous writer, who at once sees the potential of the parish and church, refers to the incumbency as being in sequestration.

³³⁶ B. Robinson, 'Catherine Booth' in *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters* (Grand Rapids, 2012), pp. 86-89.

³³⁷ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part 2* (London, 1970), pp. 287-297. R. Green, *Catherine Booth: A Biography of the Co-Founder of The Salvation Army* (Grand Rapids, 1996).

³³⁸ Salvation Army, *War Cry* (London, 1879), p. 1.

Much of the parish of St Giles bordered with Camden Chapel, whose activism in mission the author commended and sharply contrasted to the parish:

The parish church of St Giles is a very imposing structure, and is admirably situated, just at the commencement of the Peckham road. The past history of the work here is of a painful character. The parish was entirely neglected; the vicar non-resident, and for years the living was under sequestration. The present vicar (Rev. F. F. Kelly) was appointed to the parish on the death of the late vicar in 1880 by Mr F. Kelly the owner of the London directory. The population consists of 15,000 souls, of a very mixed social condition; but there is, as far as we can find out, very little except the church services provided for their needs. The church seats 1700 and on Sunday evenings there are fairly large congregations, principally of young people. There is an ornate service. The weekday services, however, do not draw. There is a splendid field of work here and the church ought to be the centre of activity. The parish is not harassed, as many of its neighbours are, by the financial difficulty, and the district may furnish many voluntary helpers. Dissent has a very firm footing.³³⁹

Camden Church is glowingly described as having 'always been a stronghold of Evangelical and Protestant truth' and being built by people 'distressed by the scandalous state of affairs at St Giles... at first neither the vicar nor the bishop would allow it to be used, and it stood idle, but a district was later secured.' He goes on to mention the specifics of evangelical missionary visiting: 'The parish, of 9000, has been divided into 52 separate districts, and each is regularly and diligently visited.' This is a vibrant church whose activism had not dampened their devotional life: 'Alongside of this activity has been maintained throughout a very high spiritual tone.' Closing social concerns are raised, and these are financial, the gentry moving out of the area, and the larger houses being replaced by the poorer high density housing.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ 'South London: its religious condition, its needs and its hopes', which was published anonymously as a supplement to 'The Record' in 1888, p. 3.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

The author of this supplement in *The Record* was writing from an evangelical perspective and with an obvious affection for evidences of new parochialism, the missionary approach to the parish within the Church of England, but was also concerned by signs of social degeneration.

Clapham Curacy, June 1864

Gaster's stay in Clapham as curate was too brief to allow a full analysis along thematic lines, but certain traits remain over this transitional period, and provide the backdrop to the work in Peckham. He encountered fruit from his labours as well as opposition, and joined a congregation from whom his beloved CMS had originally been launched. The activism, entrepreneurialism and voluntarism of his mission-honed leadership style began to find supporters who in turn voluntarily gathered around to stand behind a new mission endeavour in the district of Peckham. These key influential individuals acted as patrons to the new work and opened the doors for Gaster to walk through. Tapson's brother was approached by the rector of Clapham, to suggest a clergyman as a curate, and through a network of references Thomas Gaster was offered the curacy by Rev. William Henry Wentworth Atkins Bowyer. Gaster then consulted his friend Stephen Bridge once more, and finding that there were delays yet again to the plans for a church-plant in Denmark Hill, was advised to take this post.

Theologically, Gaster and the Rector did not see eye to eye — ‘the Rector was certainly not a friend of the Evangelical party’³⁴¹ — yet the parish church itself and the congregation had a rich evangelical heritage. There were ‘many old Evangelical people of considerable social standing, some of them very wealthy’.³⁴² As this was the church at the centre of the evangelical social reformers and of the Clapham Sect, this is hardly surprising. This was the church to which William Wilberforce belonged, and from which his son, Samuel, later to be Bishop of Winchester, also grew up.³⁴³

³⁴¹ *Brief History*, p. 11.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ M. Byrant, *The Clapham Sect* (London, 2004).

The surprise, perhaps, is that a rector who was not evangelical could have been appointed to the post in the first place, but Atkins Bowyer was Lord of the Manor, and patron, and thus probably appointed himself as rector!³⁴⁴ Ecclesiastical structures and parishes such as this were fluid and adaptable, churches swinging away from and towards evangelical, High Church and middling theologies. It was exactly this fluidity which inspired Charles Simeon to consider buying up patronages and the right to appoint curates through the Simeon Trustees, to prevent the dismantling of evangelical work by a change in incumbent.³⁴⁵

Gaster, as in India, was comfortable with individual patronage, and delighted in listing the names of the prominent defenders and supporters of his ministry, and here mentions those:

...old Evangelicals of considerable social standing: Field Marshall Sir George Pollock, Lady Pollock, Miss Leveson Gower, Dr Tapson, Dr J. Tapson, Mr Hamilton (of Hamilton, Damas and Co., publishers on Paternoster Row), Mr W. Wainwright, Mr Beddome, and others, not 'strictly Evangelical' and very many others, besides the majority of middle-class people.³⁴⁶

He also mentions Mr Hathaway whose brother he had met in Simla while Gaster was a missionary.³⁴⁷ Many of these friends 'afterwards gave largely to the Building Fund for Peckham'.³⁴⁸

Gaster's narrative reveals a network of influential lay people of evangelical persuasion in constant and energetic communication with one another, even from India to London, and a semi-formal system of personal references and assurances, without which parish ministry and mission could not thrive.

³⁴⁴ Patronage had continued for some time. The plate consists of two silver-gilt cups, two silver-gilt patens and a silver-gilt flagon of 1817 presented by non-parishioners in 1818; two silver-gilt cups and paten and glass flagon and cruet with silver-gilt mounts, the gift of F. W. A. Bowyer and Margaret his wife in 1881; a silver-gilt spoon given by Abraham Atkins in 1776, and a brass alms-basin. 'Parishes: Clapham' in *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 4* (1912), pp. 36-41. [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43028>]. Accessed 9 April 2007.

³⁴⁵ G. Kings, 'Canal, River and Rapids: Contemporary Evangelicalism in the Church of England' in *Anvil*, 20 (3) (September 2003), pp. 167-184; McLihiney, *A Gentleman in Every Slum*, p. 80.

³⁴⁶ *Brief History*, p. 12.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Gaster, despite several years' fruitful ministry in India, and as a clergyman of some experience, could not get a job without their support, and expected the exchange of information between trusted advisors. The future work of Peckham relied upon these supporters and these connections, even in securing the permission and support of church authorities and bishops. Entrepreneurism and an empowered laity drove this growth, which appears to have been tolerated by bishops rather than initiated by them. Preaching continued to be a focus of Thomas' ministry, and the rector asked him to preach in the parish church every Sunday afternoon and many others visited this service also from neighbouring congregations, including Mr Charles Sumner (a close relation of the bishop) also registrar of the Diocese who 'later on helped me greatly to secure the good will of the Bishop in the early stages of my work in Peckham.'³⁴⁹

The two years in Clapham allowed Gaster to connect with some of the same types of people who had so warmly welcomed his ministry and urged him to return to England from Simla. His tendency to overwork and burn out, already observed in India, is moderated, and the same vigorous assurance characterised his preaching ministry, including his opposition to High Church theology and practice, for which he reserves the strongest condemnation:

In those two short years of my curacy I had a most delightful period, for I needed rest; and yet there was abundant work; but there was no opposition, and such active support that perhaps another two years might have been too easy a time for one constituted not merely for preaching Christ, but for attacking Anti-Christ.³⁵⁰

It can be observed that the antipathy towards Rome, nascent in Agra, is still in full evidence in London. Noll documents this antipathy as a typical stance of global evangelicalism as late as 1945.³⁵¹ He suggests that, while not ignoring the history of Catholic-Protestant antagonism, today's Christians ought to be well-informed, and argues that some of the disagreements attacking the extremes of either case were of

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁵¹ M. Noll, *The History of an Encounter*, pp. 81-114.

human and not divine origin.³⁵² However, at the time of writing, Gaster's stance was typical of a certain portion of Anglican Evangelicals and evangelical nonconformists, and would be further developed through the work of the Church Association.

The sweetness of relationships that Gaster documents in Clapham, and the lack of opposition, were most genuine amongst those who already agreed with him theologically and therefore shared his vision for local and urban ministry, but he expected and even seemed to relish opportunities to seek out opposition with those who sympathised with High Church theology and practices. Though he was a controversialist, there is little evidence that he ever managed to convince his detractors. On the contrary, as might be expected, his decisive and impassioned views on the subjects of 'priestcraft and ritualism' provoked negative reactions in the parish, in an era when ritualism was being reincorporated into the Church of England at both theological and parish levels through the maturing Oxford Movement. So despite describing the era as delightful and without opposition, Gaster does record antagonism towards his ministry, message and methodology, and gives us insight into a congregation in Clapham with dual vision, both amongst the clergy and laity:

After about a year's residence in Clapham and enjoying the sunshine of prosperity, trials began to arise. Jealousy on the part of some Anti-Evangelical clergymen, the vexation of some high church people that the mother parish of Clapham was becoming Evangelical; the successful opposition I made to the introduction of surplices for the choirs of the new church of St Saviour's,³⁵³ Cedar's Road; my representation to the rector of the impossibility of understanding the wants of hundreds of poor people without the aid of district visitors, all of whom had been dismissed by the rector before I became curate; and the very injudicious utterance of many good people in Clapham who

³⁵² Ibid., p. 107. 'Finally, if this historic shift from all-out Catholic-Evangelical antagonism to modest Catholic-Evangelical engagement marks a genuine moment in the long history of the Church, the way to exploit that grace will certainly not be simply to ignore the past, but will be to find a middle way of hope. In recent years, a number of significant voices have shown what that middle way of realistic, historically informed hope might look like. These voices usually come from those who know the past history very well but who think that the impasses of history are the result of human rather than divine purpose.'

³⁵³ Church was built in 1864, consecrated in 1873, and became a separate parish in 1876. It was bombed in World War Two and is no longer extant.

were openly contrasting my activity with what they considered the inertness of the rector; the high favour in which I stood with some of the foremost leaders of the Evangelical party — all these combined to agitate the mind of the rector...at last [these] persuaded him to let me know that in his opinion I did not work on his lines — which was perfectly true, for he never visited his people, had no district visitors, and if anything, was a High Churchman.³⁵⁴

What Gaster conveniently neglects to mention is that the church was commissioned and personally paid for by William W. Atkins Bower, and carved out of the north side of his parish, and that it remained a chapel of ease for some years, and therefore under direct and personal control until he resigned the post in 1872.³⁵⁵ As can be seen, the dual vision diverged at several levels simultaneously. In terms of mission, the evangelicals wanted to see sustained district visiting with both pastoral and evangelistic effect. In terms of worship, the evangelical was thunderously opposed to surpliced choirs, seemingly the thin end of the wedge towards High Church practices. In terms of leadership and history, Clapham was a church with extremely influential and empowered older lay leaders, who had nurtured movements in a previous generation which had shaken the world. Gaster's ministry resonated with them, but drew out the contrasting vision by convincing the rector that this struggle for the heart of the congregation could be won by asking Gaster to leave.

Becker, in *Congregations in Conflict*, suggests that greatest conflict occurs within a congregation when there is a clash, or a movement between models and visions of congregational life, more than specific theology or leadership styles. She identified five congregational models of 'House of Worship', 'Family', 'Community', 'Leader' and a 'Mix'.³⁵⁶ According to her models, Clapham in the Wilberforce era was a leader church, expressing mission through leadership in society, and in the case of this particular church, to an astonishing and even global level. By dismissing the district visitors, the mission stance and the care for the poor the incoming rector had abandoned the previous model for the church, to adopt a 'house of worship' model,

³⁵⁴ *Brief History*, pp. 14, 15.

³⁵⁵ London Metropolitan Archive, P95/SAV; Acc/2361 Ac/57/049 Ac/56/063

³⁵⁶ Becker, *Congregations in Conflict*, p. 15, 16, 126-148. See also Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 470 on the balance of clergy and lay power in mission.

which thereby also strengthened the role of the rector over the programmes and influences of the church. That the rector placed his personal resources into the building project without creating an activist plan for mission or evangelism, care for the poor or visiting actually serves to reinforce the 'sanctuary' theology and the 'house of worship' perception on the role, use and function of church and congregation. Gaster paints a vivid picture of a church whose previous rector, John Venn, had founded CMS, and whose key leaders, including William Wilberforce and Charles Grant, had had such profound global reach. Within a generation this was no longer the operant culture. Thus, Gaster represented the old 'leader' model of congregation and mission within a congregation which had only quite recently moved models. Conflict was natural, but led to a new development, as the Evangelicals used their money and influence to financially back Gaster's renewed vision for the burgeoning community of Peckham. As in Simla, Gaster found support from enthusiastic lay evangelicals patrons, whilst being accustomed to thinking of himself as opposed to cautious, fashionable and indifferent people and the ecclesiastical establishment.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ This approach can be seen to have precedent amongst some nonconformists. F. Bowers, *A Bold Experiment: The story of Bloomsbury Chapel and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church* (Bloomsbury, 1999), pp. 13-32.

CHAPTER 3

Thomas Gaster and the Birth of All Saints Peckham: 1867 to 1873

Thomas Joseph Gaster was ready for 'independent action' once again and went back to Rev. Tapson to talk about starting a new church in Peckham. Whilst walking together down Camberwell Grove discussing this possibility they met the Rev. J Walliss, Clerical Secretary to the South London Fund under the Bishop of Winchester, who described how a wealthy lay patron had given money for a new church to be called St John's. Walliss was seeking Tapson and said: 'I have come from the Bishop to see you about forming a new district in Peckham'. 'There is the district', said Mr Tapson, 'and here is the man'.³⁵⁸ Walliss already knew Gaster well, and in the next weeks various friends, including Stephen Bridges, worked on the bishop in 'procuring his assent and, I was in due course, licensed to the missionary curacy of St John's Peckham.'³⁵⁹ The original patron, whose identity cannot be traced, according to Gaster, 'may have been a Jesuit', and though this was an unlikely slurr, he nevertheless stipulated certain High Church elements should be incorporated into the building constructed with his gift to the South London Churches fund. Gaster asked to be released from these architectural features by the Bishop of Winchester who had oversight of South London, and was thus in his own words:

...delivered from the man who subsequently became one of the chief promoters of a great Ritualistic church; and thus once more God frustrated Romanising efforts, and made them instrumental in setting me free from Ritualistic contrivances.³⁶⁰

Six years later the name was changed to All Saints, Blenheim Grove by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Rev. R. Tapson would be appointed to the newly formed church of St Mark's, Lyncombe, in Bath in 1864, and had continuing connections with the Simeon trustees and New Inn Hall in Oxford.

³⁵⁹ *Brief History*, p. 16.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ Samuel Wilberforce D. D., son of William Wilberforce, born in Clapham, Bishop of Winchester 1870 to 1873, succeeded Sumner who resigned his See in 1869.

Gaster, with his two friends, Rev. Robert Tapson, the Priest in Charge of St Giles Camberwell and Bridges, Vicar of St Matthew's Denmark Hill, walked through the district between their two areas of ministry, to find a site for both church and schools. The only suitable place was a garden, on sale by auction in the city about four days after they saw the notice. He returned to Clapham and reported back on his meeting to a lay patron within the congregation of Holy Trinity: 'I went to Mr Symes, who said, "Do not be anxious I will give you a hundred guineas and will buy the land, and you can pay me afterwards as the money comes in."'”³⁶² They went to the auction with this promise of money at short notice and bought the site freehold for £750, which was considered to be a very low sum.

The Process of finding new land for church buildings in emerging suburban and new urban communities was similarly at the initiative of lay patrons in Chelsea and Kensington, whereas in East and Central London, already densely populated, the process was somewhat different, and more expensive. And while this quick turnaround in Peckham greatly contrasts to the committee-based approach of several other church building projects, it has more in common with the approach to churchplanting supported by London's industrious nonconformist new entrepreneurs. One of those was Morton Peto, a self-made railway and building magnate, who regularly initiated and funded churches for Baptists with the same lack of democratic consultation or caution. Spurgeon admiringly said that 'Sir Morton is a man who builds one chapel with the hope that it will be the seedling for another.' He took personal initiative and entirely financed the plot and construction costs for Bloomsbury Chapel.³⁶³ Tait called church-building in suburban West London 'a firework display of aggressive optimism', sometimes driven by self-interested landowners concerned for the success of their privately funded land development plans, or by 'private individuals with strong religious convictions.'³⁶⁴ Kensington parish was intentionally subdivided into 14 sub-divisions under the oversight of Rev John Sinclair, Rector of St Mary Abbots.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Bowers, *A Bold Experiment*, p. 26.

³⁶⁴ A. Tait, *St Mary, the Boltons: The Country Church in Kensington and Chelsea* (London, 2004), p. 2.

In 1849, Robert Gunter was one of those self- interested landowners in Kensington, who, deciding to diversify from market gardening, tested the housing market with an initial development of a church with houses clustered around it, selling the plot of land to the Church Commissioners, then putting the proceeds back into the building fund, and starting the church. The perpetual curate intended for the new church, Rev Hogarth Swale, actually funded the rest of the building himself, contributing over £6,000 to construction costs.³⁶⁵ In East London and Bermondsey, most church sites already contained other buildings which needed demolishing, and this sometimes made the plots more expensive. In Bermondsey, it was still at the instigation of lay patrons rather than clergy that new sites were purchased. Bartlett states that ‘The enthusiasm to build came from a group of local businessmen... not from the Rector of Bermondsey who remained suspicious for some time,’ and the resultant St James’ was completed in 1829 for the enormous sum of £31,000.³⁶⁶ Indeed, it does appear that Gaster had struck a bargain. A similar site was acquired by the South London Methodists, who had bought a nearby plot near Queen’s Road in Peckham in 1864 for £1,600, though they finished the building for a further £6,993.³⁶⁷

Legal Provisions for New Churches

This process of establishing a new Church of England church, congregation and parish was made easier through a series of legal and statutory innovations which directly led to the establishment of All Saints and the burst of activity in Peckham and the surrounding areas of South London from 1867 to 1901.³⁶⁸ Several legal provisions were necessary to enable changes and growth, especially within the established church. The legislative freedom afforded to Nonconformity, though bequeathing less in social standing, initially, did at least encourage the formation of new churches, congregations and social initiatives without recourse to lengthy and

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁶⁶ Bartlett, *The Churches in Bermondsey*, p. 55. This is contrasted to later provisions in Bermondsey and in Rotherhithe, p. 58. McIlhiney, *Gentleman*, p. 79 shows that Watts-Ditchfield raised £29,000 in his first three years of ministry in Bethnal Green towards new church building and mission projects.

³⁶⁷ J. Beasley, *Building Together: The Story of Peckham Methodist Church* (London, 1985), pp. 5, 7.

³⁶⁸ Bartlett, *The Churches in Bermondsey*, pp. 2, 110-238, marks the golden age of the parish as 1880 to 1914.

tortuous negotiations with ecclesiastical hierarchy.³⁶⁹ Both political and theological motives lay behind moves during the middle season (of 1819 to 1864) to ‘liberate’, ‘modernise’ or at the very least to simplify the conditions for the growth of new churches in the Church of England, especially in areas of rapid urbanisation and population expansion. Calculations suggested that 60 to 70 new churches that seated over 1000 would be needed to be established every year to meet the burgeoning population, which had grown from 5 ½ million to over 10 ½ million in the previous century and showed no signs of slowing. There was a sense of acceptance building that something more than the meagre Queen Anne’s Bounty would be necessary to meet these demands. Having already established the complexity of Church of England provision within and alongside the parochial system, legal reform had to make provision for the existing structure of churches and congregations in order to amend each, and then develop a manner by which new churches and parishes could be formed within and from the Church of England and within both ecclesiastical and civil law. This was an enormous piece of work, and the complexity alone had frustrated the establishment of new parishes even when the will and the means appeared to be there. Nonconformist churches had been growing for a generation, but neither denominational competition nor panic had been enough until the second half of the century to generate the large sums of money, the legal work and the concentration of resources which were needed to build new churches. The new emphasis on church building and forming new congregations in the Church of England, initially made possible by grants for large churches in some of the most populous areas, from the Church Building Commission, was followed by a realisation that the pace of building had to increase. This was not founded in ecclesiastical one-upmanship but owed its success to a self-generated dynamic and logic for growth which had to be more determined than the legislative obstacles.³⁷⁰

For example, the 1818 and 1819 Church Building Acts, which form ‘His Majesty’s Commission for Building New Churches’ are sometimes referred together as Million Acts. The Acts made provision for five distinct legal forms of church and chapel

³⁶⁹ J. Morris, *The Nonconformist Experience in Croydon* (Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society, December 1992) make specific mention of ‘freedom from legal restraints’ as a factor which enabled growth and social reform rather than hindered it after 1828, pp. 1-3.

³⁷⁰ Traill, op. cit., p. 22, 23, 24 (e.g. new distinct parishes, new district parish, consolidated chapelries, district chapelries and patronage districts – all of which were served by perpetual curacies.)

within the Church of England, and their various relations to the parish system. Although these acts brought some clarity to varieties of parochial expressions they were drafted to ensure that the rights of incumbents were retained, both to receive tithes and the proceeds of glebe, and also to appoint or veto new churches at their convenience. The first Acts were accompanied with grants which led to the financing of between eighty five and a hundred churches nationwide, with more funds made available in 1824 which was more widely distributed.³⁷¹

The next phase of reform for new parishes was felt through the passage of Pluralities Acts in 1838.³⁷² These allowed the union or separation of conjoining parishes where it could be demonstrated that the union or division could be shown to be in the interests of the furtherance of religion, and allowed the transfer of assets for the intention of furthering the interests of religion.³⁷³ This was progress for those seeking to establish wholly new parishes in areas of burgeoning population growth. Crucially these were the first Acts which allowed assets and tithes to be apportioned from the main benefice to the new parish in proportion to the needs of the population. 1843 Peel's Act or New Parishes Act³⁷⁴ was the further parliamentary legislation added to the major provisions of the 1818/19 Acts and was designed to allow adaption of parish provision, especially in areas of population expansion, and began to envisage a larger centrally-held fund to actively encourage and endow new parishes and especially make contributions to the construction of church buildings:

To make better provision for the spiritual care of populous parishes, and to render the estates and revenues invested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of England, and the funds at the disposal of the Queen Anne's Bounty, applicable immediately to such purpose.³⁷⁵

The hot air expended in parliament made a significant difference to the number of new churches on the ground. The Commissioners immediately formed 200 new districts upon this transfer of funds, amounting to income of £18,000 per

³⁷¹ 58 Geo 3, c. 45, s. 16 (whose powers are enlarged by 1 & 2 Vict. c. 107, s. 12).

³⁷² 1 & 2 Vict. c. 106.

³⁷³ This was followed by the Pluralities Acts 1850 and the Pluralities Acts Amendment Act of 1885, and only repealed 1 June 1992.

³⁷⁴ 6 & 7 Vict. c. 37; 7 & 8 Vict. c. 94.

³⁷⁵ G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Church of England* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1964), Traill, op. cit., p. 28.

year. The provisions guaranteed between £100 and £150 per year in income to the new incumbents, and were nevertheless limited to forming districts where no pre-existing Church of England licensed church or chapel existed. Peel's Act empowered the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to form districts, if both need and endowment had been demonstrated. As soon as the church building itself had been completed, the district would be afforded all the rights and responsibilities, and the status of a parish in its own right — on equal footing with the original or neighbouring parish. The order of priorities of a completed building guaranteeing parochial status within the provisions of this Act shows that the provision of church buildings and licensed worship spaces was a parliamentary priority and also explains why new congregations built their churches so quickly.

Blandford's Act or the New Parishes Act of 1856 was the most comprehensive review of the new parish acts and amendments — almost all of the provisions made the founding and creation of new parishes easier, gave the sitting incumbent less power, and allowed lay individuals and societies to found new churches and congregations without recourse to lengthy negotiations.³⁷⁶ The rights of the new incumbents were strengthened legally, spiritually and financially. The patronage of the new churches was secured and trustees would be appointed to maintain the new ministries in perpetuity, including provisions for housing of new clergy and ministers. The expressed purpose of Blandford's Acts was to bring an equality of status between the ancient or older parishes and the new ones:³⁷⁷

There was still wanting some measure which would embrace within its operation, all those ecclesiastical divisions of modern creation which still remained in a subordinate position, and raise them to an equality with parishes of earlier date.³⁷⁸ Lord Blandford's Act has...supplied

³⁷⁶ 19 & 20 Vict. c. 104.

³⁷⁷ HC Deb 13 February 1856, vol. 140 cc. 681-9. On the second reading of the Formation of Parishes Bill the Marquis of Blandford gave his reasons for wanting to expunge the title 'perpetual curate': 'Another objection was, that the minister was styled "perpetual curate". It might be asked, "What's in a name?" But there is a great deal in a name. It would be generally understood that a perpetual curate was either nominally or really in a state of dependence on the incumbent of the mother church.' So the Bill suggested the title of 'vicar' or 'rector' should be given to the minister in charge of the new church and parish.

³⁷⁸ Blandford's introduction to the second reading of the Bill clearly expresses the purposes of the Bill. [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1856/feb/13/formation-of-parishes-bill#S3V0140P0_18560213_HOC_101]. Accessed 23 May 2012.

that want, and has provided all that was necessary to render the modern system complete.³⁷⁹

Gladstone, the leader of the opposition, and Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary both confirmed that although the government had not proposed the Bill, they were grateful to Lord Blandford for having worked so hard on behalf of the churches. The growing Nonconformist power in Parliament had objected vehemently to any centralised funding for either education for church buildings which represented any bias to the established church. Gladstone became an ardent political proponent for the voluntary principle in church affairs, declaring the voluntary system to be ‘the best and safest of the alternatives before us, as the most likely to keep in a state of freshness the heart and conscience of man.’³⁸⁰ As the Acts made no request to the government to specifically endow the new churches or contribute financially in any way the opposition felt it would seem unnecessary to object to anything which would improve the state of the church and would cost the state nothing.

On 1 January 1857 the provisions authorised in Blandfords Act, forming the Ecclesiastical Commission of England were activated. This gave a single institution the role of raising and distributing funds as well as administered the creation of new parishes according to the new legal provisions.³⁸¹ And finally came the 1869 Church Buildings and New Parishes Acts Amendment³⁸² following which the template for new churches, and the specified amounts for endowment were laid down.³⁸³

It was into this context that Gaster sought to establish the legal and territorial framework for a new parish. To the congregation of All Saints and the local residents of Peckham, Gaster was also an iconic patron and entrepreneurial leader. He

³⁷⁹ Traill, op. cit., p. 32.

³⁸⁰ J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 153-160; G. I. T Machin, *Politics and the Churches, 1832 to 1868* (Oxford, 1977), p. 382; R. Currie, A. D. Gilbert and L. Horslee (eds.), *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1978).

³⁸¹ In 1864 a debate was introduced by Roundell Palmer on 'Church Buildings and New Parishes Acts Amendment Bill' – then withdrawn. The debate refers to Peel's Law (1843), Blandford's (1856) and Million Acts (1818, 1819), Queen Anne's Bounty discussions concerning church rates. HC Deb notes new churches acts Vol. 175 cc. 1509-1527.

³⁸² Vict. 32 & 33 c. 94. UK Public General Acts 1974 c. 22 repealed the legislation of this amendment.

³⁸³ Sites for Places of Worship Bill. HC Deb 6 April 1870 Vol. 200 cc. 11. 382-414.

personally oversaw the construction and commission of builders and architects for the school house, the extension and the church, and then for the mission hall in Victoria Place.

The multiple competencies expected of an urban clergyman will be explored further in the next chapter, but at this stage it is important to note the symbolic value to the community of an enabled leader. As the correspondence makes explicit, Gaster was negotiating in person the ecclesiastical boundaries of the parish with George Pitcher and Mr Pringle of the Church Commissioners. [Fig. 3] No other lawyers were involved; all the correspondence was personally between Gaster and relevant parties at the Church Commissioners. The entire process was carried out without committee or contention and was swiftly realised. The Metropolitan Archives and Lambeth Palace Archives correspond with the All Saints Peckham parish records. The name change from St John's Camberwell to All Saints, Blenheim Grove was approved in 1872 and a copy is retained of the marking of the new district.³⁸⁴ [Fig. 4.]

A New Peckham Project

The missionary project had as its aim both the establishment of a church, and the alleviation of poverty, the twin mandates so close to the heart of the old Clapham Sect. Publicity for the new church in Peckham was also taken seriously, presented initially as a 'project' of providing a school and church in the under-resourced area of Peckham. Parts of Peckham were akin to slums. Victoria Place, an area near Peckham High Street was, in the 1860s and 1870s, declared by T. J. Gaster to be pitiful:

The condition of Victoria Place, Stable Yard, and Paradise Place was abominable. The houses were generally decayed and awfully dirty; many of the inhabitants were drunkards; open-air fights were frequent; the children unwashed and ragged; the language full of cursing and defilement.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ London Metropolitan Archive, P73/GIS/185; P73/GIS/186; *DW OP 73/I*.

³⁸⁵ T. J. Gaster, 'Addresses 1868-1891', cited in Beasley, *Peckham in Nineteenth Century*, p. 14 (Copies of these sermons no longer extant).

By the close of the century, these two or three slum areas of Peckham had much improved. Gaster had already founded at least two schools and a sanatorium in India, as well as one new congregation and several prayer communities and went about establishing the need for the work in such terms — publicising the building work as a 'project' that needed financial support and backing. He had experience of raising money for the school through backers in Poplar, and employed similar organisational ability in this instance also.

W. H. Blanch, himself seeking to give a historical backdrop to enable self-understanding of new residents in a burgeoning new district, wrote in *Ye Parish of Camberwell* of All Saints that:

This church has been called into existence by the great and ever-increasing wants of the district in which it is placed, and the funds to erect it have been raised by the Rev. T. J. Gaster, whose energy and zeal have received their just reward. About eight years ago (July 1866) the members of the little church met at a private house in the Choumert Road (No. 6, now No. 66), and the first service was attended by five adults and twelve children. In 1866 (Dec 4) the foundation of the school-church was laid, and the first portion of it opened for public worship in the following May. In 1870 the foundation-stone of the present church was laid by the late Bishop Wilberforce, and the consecration by the same Bishop took place on 14 July 1872. The architect was Mr Coe, and the builders Messrs. Nixon, of Lambeth, and the cost of the church and the schools reached the large sum of \$6,480 in addition to which an endowment and repair fund of £1,150 was raised. Besides the Sunday Schools, there is a mission-room in Victoria Place in connection with the church. The church is capable of seating 960 persons.³⁸⁶

The leadership skills of the mission field became invaluable. Gaster had been forced to be self-supporting and financing, and to regulate the financial side of ministry as

³⁸⁶ W. H. Blanch, *Ye Parish of Camberwell* (London, 1875), p. 208.

well as the more spiritual activities of preaching. He seems to have learned his lessons on relying on total voluntarism, for in Simla he had no financial worries of the kind which had dogged his ministry and reputation in Agra; then in Camberwell he had overseen in only a few months the entire re-working of the heating system for the church. His Indian mission experience had made him an exceptional project manager, accustomed to achieving and constructing, but as a man of action, with little or no consultation. His method of leadership was to act with conviction, and then seek support, rather than waiting for consensus.

This is all the more striking in contrast with similar building projects documented by Clyde Binfield, also amongst evangelicals, but amongst Coventry Nonconformists who had not been affected by the extra-European missionary movement in their decision-making processes.³⁸⁷ Plans went back and forth, committees were established to find and secure a site, separate committees to approve the design and negotiate with architects, and a further committee to raise the money. Binfield describes it as a saga and a soap-opera, with one of these committees alone meeting over 140 times in a year.³⁸⁸ It ended up being able to seat 900 — the same capacity as All Saints, taking ten years to build from start to finish, and the building work costing over £12,000. Gaster single-handedly did the work of three committees, organised the fundraising, negotiated with the Diocese for the parish boundaries, and with the architects over design and building. He was on the lookout for best practice, the supreme example of which was getting the best value for money in designing and building the church. He copied the plan of another church (St Philip's Kennington Road, Lambeth), thus keeping building and architectural costs down, and pragmatically had fewer risks to take on construction.³⁸⁹

The estimated costs for the project were £8000, of which £1000 had been pledged from the South London Fund. The major programme of church building, which was a response to the burgeoning population and needs of London, meant that all over South London the enormous parishes were being carved up into districts and then established as parishes in their own right. Camberwell parish included three huge

³⁸⁷ C. Binfield, *Pastors and People: Biography of a Baptist Church, Queen's Road, Coventry* (Coventry, 1984), pp. 59-73.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

³⁸⁹ *Brief History*, p. 29, 30.

districts of Dulwich, Camberwell and Peckham, and stretched all the way to Honor Oak and up to Herne Hill. Between 1825 and 1895, 25 new parishes were formed out of the existing single parish of Camberwell, the vast majority being formed between 1844 and 1887, concentrating in the few years following 1865. This was a time of rapid growth and rapid adjustments with the population increasing tenfold from 1831 to 1891.³⁹⁰ As far as the building of new churches was concerned, the construction of St Georges Camberwell had been part of the Commissioners' initiative to build new churches in 1822 to 1824³⁹¹ and funds were received from the second parliamentary grant to contribute to the building of St Paul Herne Hill (1843), Emmanuel (1841) and St Mary Magdalene in Peckham (1839/40).³⁹² Previous to this modest building project in the first part of the century, the Nonconformist and Connection churches (such as Camden Chapel and Grove chapel) were the most visible church engagement in the Peckham area. McLeod rightly traces the engagement of the churches with the working class populations and notes that the revival in the fortunes of Anglican churches which began after 1840 was mirrored by the converse tailing off of growth within Nonconformist congregations which had boomed in the years leading up to the midpoint of the century.³⁹³

Once again, Gaster was at pains to point out discrimination against evangelicals from the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. In a nearby area, he suggested that the South London Fund had given £1500 towards the building and furnishing of the chancel of a new church with high theological practice, whereas St John's (later All Saints) was to receive £1000 for the entire project. When Gaster asked why he was receiving less, he was told it was because he was 'such a Protestant'. Two weeks later Mr Symes came to the rescue again, and decided to buy a vicarage outright for the benefit of Rev. Gaster personally, and did not want it included as part of the freehold of the benefice, and thus the next door plot to the new site was secured and given to Thomas and his family for the work to flourish in Peckham.³⁹⁴ [Fig. 5.]

³⁹⁰ *Statistical Abstract for London* (Vol. IV) (1901); Census tables for Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell.

³⁹¹ M. H. Port, *Six Hundred New Churches: The Church Building Commission 1818-1856* (Reading, 2006), p. 168, 179.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 327, 336, 131.

³⁹³ H. McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1984), pp. 30-32.

³⁹⁴ *Brief History*, p. 18.

Construction of a New Church

To the congregational story, and in English Victorian ecclesiastical culture, of all traditions, a completed church was a sign of victory after struggle, a sign of completion for the emerging congregation.³⁹⁵ A church site was, depending on theological and cultural emphasis, a castle, a home, a garden, a factory for social transformation, a temple for purity of worship and or a local military headquarters for the spiritual and cultural battles of global proportions.³⁹⁶

For the Christian leader, and the evangelical, steeped in scriptural narrative, construction was symbolically powerful. Culturally, it spoke of self-sufficiency and achievement, as well as providing a sense of permanence to a fledgling religious community. Legally, it confirmed the rights of the clergy and congregation with regards to the established church. Culturally, the church building was a physical anchor for the community within her numinous micro-environment and social context. Once a church building and her parish had been built and licensed by the bishop, and then completed, it guaranteed a freedom of expression, a freedom of mission, and a freedom of worship for the congregation which in turn settled and confirmed the congregation, affording full protection from the uncertainty of the pioneering nature of contested space and status.

Given this importance, the action of construction was also highly symbolic, with ceremony attached to the laying of a foundation stone, or for many nonconformists, the presentation of an engraved silver trowel to mark the occasion. Architecture and sacred space spoke of status, an end to alienation, a special belonging, of conforming, performance and success. Within London and her environs, the status of hamlets became parishes, which then developed into localised districts, and then could become districts within the burgeoning metropolis. Poplar, the environment in which

³⁹⁵ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 395, 405f., describes the extent to which multiplication of churches was accompanied by new buildings, and the importance attached to them. For Lee Mount Baptist Church in Halifax, the congregation symbolises the building of churches for a congregation as successive ships constructed for journeys. W. Bailey, *Enterprising Journey* (Halifax, 1958) [https://johnrhudson.me.uk/Brief_Baptist_History/Enterprising_journey.pdf]. Accessed 12 April 2016.

³⁹⁶ The symbolic importance of buildings cannot be underestimated. Railton says that for the Salvation Army the era of open air services and tent 'cathedrals' gave way to more spiritual and social security: 'With the Establishment of a Headquarters that cost £3,500 in one of the main thoroughfares of Eastern London, we may look upon the General as having at last got a footing in the world.' G. S. Railton, *The Authoritative Life of General William Booth* (New York, 1912), p. 64.

Gaster was born, transitioned from hamlet in Stepney, to civil parish status in 1817, and then became its own local authority in 1855. The new civil parish immediately set about building a new parish church, to seat 1710 persons which would befit its new elevated social status within London.³⁹⁷ The construction of the new church in Peckham, itself recently afforded a greater status through the railway and new developments of housing further from the overcrowded and polluted urban centre, must be seen to be of social as well as of spiritual significance.³⁹⁸

And though this was an integral part of the Poplar, Peckham and Camberwell stories, a short comparison in other parts of burgeoning London demonstrate that this connection of community and the building of a parish church was a fundamental stepping stone in establishing new local areas as having dignity in their own right.³⁹⁹ In Lambeth and Southwark the establishment of new local churches, and especially attendance at Sunday Schools, was a sign of new and growing community and involvement, regardless of whether attendees were ‘true believers’.⁴⁰⁰ Bartlett points out that the relative obscurity of Bermondsey, meant that ‘it is possible to observe church work conducted by men and women who did not often attain national prominence.’⁴⁰¹ Bordering Peckham, and sharing the same new railway into London Bridge, the establishment of new parish churches and the subdivision of the old parishes was of importance to all classes.⁴⁰² The start of the church building boom was 1829 with the consecration of St James’, and there is some evidence to suggest it was founded for socio-economic as much as spiritual reasons, as a plant from St Saviour’s in Southwark.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁷ ‘Prominently placed close to the East India Dock Road, the church was no doubt intended to be an arresting symbol of the new parish.’ ‘Between Poplar High Street and East India Dock Road: All Saints’ Church and Rectory’, Survey of London: volumes 43 and 44: Poplar, Blackwall and Isle of Dogs (1994), pp. 176-180.

³⁹⁸ W. Morris, ‘The Revival of Architecture, fortnightly review, May 1888’ in *Architecture, Industry and Wealth* (London, 1902), pp. 199-205.

³⁹⁹ A. Tait, *St Mary the Boltons: The Country Church in Kensington and Chelsea* (London, 2004), pp. 1-6. And further west in Southall: *St George’s Southall: The First 100 Years: A Short History of our Church and Congregation* (Southall: St George’s Church, 2008), p. 11.

⁴⁰⁰ S. C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c.1880-1939* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 24-51, 126-135; J. Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society, Lambeth 1870-1930* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 90-105; for Poplar see S. Porter, *Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs: Parish of All Saints*, Vols. 1, 2 (London, 1994).

⁴⁰¹ A. B. Bartlett, ‘The Churches in Bermondsey 1880-1939’ (University of Birmingham PhD Thesis, 1987), p. 25.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p29.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 55-59, cites the archives of St James’ benefice, and M. H. Port, *Six Hundred New Churches: The Church Building Commission 1818-1856* (1961), pp. 79-81.

To the evangelical, the construction of a school and church spoke of spiritual and human transformation. The biblical narratives resonate more than the concomitant social aspirations or civic developments. A market garden becomes a church, much like the threshing floor of Araunah became the temple of David and Solomon; both perceived as being on the outskirts of the growing and needy capital city. Those who built drew on Nehemiah, whose building and battling secured the social benefits of the local community in Jerusalem. This implicit symbolism was often made more explicit, as in the writings of Charles Spurgeon, whose journal, *The Sword and Trowel*, published monthly from 1865, was inspired by Nehemiah where the families of Jerusalem build and stand guard with sword and trowel under the leadership of the spiritually gifted Nehemiah. Spurgeon makes the application to London's new urban evangelical:

We shall supply interesting reading upon general topics, but our chief aim will be to arouse believers to action, and to suggest to them plans by which the kingdom of Jesus may be extended. To widen the bounds of Zion and gather together the outcasts of Israel is our heart's desire. We would sound the trumpet, and lead our comrades to the fight. We would ply the Trowel with untiring hand for the building up of Jerusalem's dilapidated walls, and wield the Sword with rigor and valour against the enemies of the truth.⁴⁰⁴

The spiritual fight and the positive aims of building the church and a Christian society were bonded together in rapidly expanding London, lying at the heart of a martial Empire. In this inhabited story, the faithful people of God fight for spiritual and physical territory, and when they build, settle, building homes and places of worship and education. The new urban optimists saw progress in urbanisation and sought solace in rural refreshment. All Saints, architecturally, therefore was a new church intended to speak of the historic settled and the certain — somewhere new, exciting and safe for a people who were modern, courageous and settled.

⁴⁰⁴ 'They which builded on the wall, and they that bear burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so he builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.' Nehemiah 4:17-18 (KJV) *Sword and Trowel*, Preface (London, 1865).

A new church building was a symbol of a worshipping identity encased in wood and stone. The project of All Saints involved construction from the very beginning; firstly a space for the school, which doubled up as a church, and then for the church building itself. The first constructed space was a multifunctional schoolroom, with toilets, which could serve the community through the week, and also provide a home to the fledgling congregation on Sundays. This meant that the church building itself was explicitly a statement of worship. The erection of the building would glorify God, but the aesthetics, dimensions and internal fittings and functions would both shape and confirm the worshipping life of a congregation in secured and constructed space.

Gaster claimed to have saved time and money by securing the plans from the same architect for the church of St Philips Kennington Road. Comparison of the architectural plans for the two churches indicate that though the dimensions and the essential shape of the two buildings are comparable, there are several distinct variations, as well as a reversal, leading to opposite towers. [Figs. 6, 7.]

The London architect, Henry E. Coe, worked on St Philips Kennington in 1863, which was described as ‘rag-faced, with slate roofs, in fourteenth-century style. It has a low southwest tower, with an octagonal top stage and a spire.’⁴⁰⁵ All Saints Church was built about 1870 of rag and Bath stone in the style of the thirteenth or fourteenth century. It consisted of a chancel with a rounded apse, nave with semi-dormer clerestory windows, vestries, north and south aisles and the stump of a north-west porch tower with one bell. The roofs were tiled.⁴⁰⁶ The rag stone facing was extremely popular in the building boom of South London, given the practicalities of quarries in Kent, which were connected by railways and barges to the centre of South London. Gaster was not alone in his sympathy for the ‘fourteenth century’ style. Coe was working on at least three churches simultaneously — St Philips Kennington, St Philip the Evangelist in Camberwell, and All Saints Peckham. Of these, only All Saints still remains, but the ground plans make the progression clear. The following building of St Philips Camberwell incorporates this new apse feature introduced into

⁴⁰⁵ [<http://www.southwark.anglican.org/downloads/lostchurches/LAM10.pdf>] (from Basil F. L. Clarke, 'Parish Churches of London', Batsford, 1966). Accessed 6 July 2013.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Parishes: Camberwell, A History of the County of Surrey', 4 (1912), pp. 24-36. [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=43027>]. Accessed 8 August 2013. Note the confusion in fourteenth and thirteenth century style designation.

the basic design by Gaster. [Fig. 8.]⁴⁰⁷ Philips in Kennington Road has the tower and offset chancel and vestry but no apse, which was introduced by Gaster, who also adapted the plans to incorporate a larger section for children's seating, and brought the congregational pews into the chancel, replacing the choir and maximising capacity. [Fig. 9.]

The congregational pews can be seen in the chancel, and the hand amendment by Gaster changing the plan from altar to table. The space for children's seating is clearly shown — and every seat numbered for 960 adults with visibility to the pulpit maintained. [Fig. 10.] In the end, the organ construction took almost all the space, up to pew 95, and eight rows of children's seating was lost. Modern alterations in 2010 have removed the altar and restored the original lines of visibility and capacity with a glazed meeting space.

The neo-medievalism and the neo-gothic were developed and then quickly incorporated into the facing of church architecture and public buildings. Gaster's experience of Indian church building projects, with new ecclesiastical buildings in both Agra and Simla, gave him a very clear expectation, aesthetic sympathy and interest. He naturally blended the intentional softer archaisms of the newly-revived English medieval style, with a love for Protestant theological priorities. The church building was meant to be beautiful, new, functional and reminiscent of medieval and neo-gothic style, and yet decidedly Protestant and English. Inside the duck egg blue tiles and geometric designs of the inner wall of the apse were blended with the clearly displayed Ten Commandments and the Creed set into painted metal panels in the wall. The church plan lacks some of the fine ribbing and details of the more classic neo-gothic style, and incorporates certain neo-Norman and Romanesque features of rounded windows and lower walls and buttresses, but nevertheless resonates with a pale green light from the large windows in the nave, transepts and apse. The building was roofed in timber with joists connected with ship-building joints, and was equipped with a boiler (with chimney plainly visible) and under-floor heating through ducts and grills. Within a short time, an organ was installed, but no choir stalls, and a

⁴⁰⁷ Image from [Churchplansonline.org] ICBS 07693 ff. 1-19. Accessed 7 August 2013.

wall was built to the street in rag stone finish, but the tower was never completed. The low side aisles and minimal pillars enabled a cheaper construction without diminishing capacity or visibility.

The illustration on the original pew rent notice, [Figs. 10, 11.] intended to garner support and subscriptions for the building project indicates how the new building of All Saints was envisaged, with a tower embellished with gothic features, a village setting and genteel parishioners and their children strolling to Matins. The artistic representation sets the future church in a rural village parochial setting, even though the train line and the road were already in existence. The realised plans for both churches illustrate the mirror image and neo-gothic style, but neither church finished their tower. [Figs. 12, 13.]⁴⁰⁸ The following photographs bring All Saints Peckham up to date. Very few adaptations have been made to the external walls and features of the church. New gates have been constructed, the roof repaired, and several decorative elements, such as crosses, have fallen off the roof and have not been replaced. [Figs. 14, 15, 16.]

The laying of the foundation stone was met in the local press with some amazement, for about £3000 had already been raised by November 1870, with more information published on 3 December 1870 about the three phases of the building work, concluding with the tower which was to cost £1200. Gaster is reported as being aware from the earliest days that the congregation needed outside support: 'The inhabitants of the district are of very limited means, so that we need large help from friends at a distance.' The consecration was by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce on 27 July 1872.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ All Saints Peckham [<http://www.peckhamhistory.org.uk/churchesCofE.htm>]; St Philips Kennington Road [<http://partleton.co.uk/StPhilipLambeth2.jpg>].

⁴⁰⁹ South London Press (refs. 1870-1883) 26 November 1870; 3 December 1870; 27 July 1872; 27 April 1878; 12 June 1880; 6 November 1880; 6 August 1880; 19 November 1881; 31 December 1881; 14 April 1882.

The Birth of the Ministry, July 1866 - June 1867

Gaster made mission his first priority, despite the pressing needs of growing a congregation and building a sanctuary. His Indian experience and mission practice with the CMS was to approach places for Christian worship as functional and thus was to view houses and normal buildings as wholly appropriate venues for worship. This was in no way unique, as can also be seen from the brief assessment of other sites for worship in the Peckham area. The police station had been registered as a worship venue, and the train station upper rooms were being used to house Rye Lane Baptist Church in its early days. The rooms are still in existence, and are now used as a guard's social space, but at the time of writing it is currently unusable for social gatherings. Gaster's own preference had been for intimacy in worship and with commitment in prayer meetings. He uses this 'house, church and family' model as the basis for establishing his congregation even before he had built a house for himself or a sanctuary for the congregation.

Until the vicarage could be built, Gaster, keen to progress the ministry, moved into a semi-detached house at the corner of Choumert Grove, in Choumert Road where the 'board school now stands'. His method in beginning the church bears direct relation to his missionary methods in India: finding and securing a site, working hard to gather a small core and developing the work from there, growing a congregation through prayer and worship, maintaining house to house visiting and the practice of public evangelism.

Using good publicity throughout the area of concentration he publicised the church in the new district, secured space and the services of someone who could lead the singing and provide musical accompaniment and even painted a large board to be put in the street as he had done when selling books in the markets of Agra: 'Meanwhile I had printed a circular, a copy of which was sent to every house and shop in the new district explaining the whole project.'⁴¹⁰ His description of the earliest days are poignant:

⁴¹⁰ *Brief History*, p. 17.

The two rooms on the ground floor were (when the folding doors were open) capable of seating about eighty people. I had the floor covered with matting, bought a large number of chairs, placed a harmonium there, given to me by a lady in Clapham for religious purposes, and caused a stand for a pulpit and another to raise me a little above the heads of the people to be made; as also a noticeboard to be put up in the forecourt announcing the hours of the Divine Service. I then called on as many people as possible living near the house; and resolved to begin Divine Service on the first Sunday in July 1866.⁴¹¹

Considering that he writes about the moment 30 years later, his recollection is precise, and indicates that he continued his practice of writing missionary journals through this period as a missionary curate as well: ‘It was a fine morning. Five adults and a few children came; but in the evening there were twenty-five adults and many children.’⁴¹²

The first eleven months, July 1866 to June 1867, were a whirlwind of growth, development and mission. The Chourmert Road rooms got crowded, 80 people squeezing in with many sitting on the stairs and on to the first-floor landing. His first annual address, given in January 1868, records large sums of money raised, ministries thriving, a Thursday evening service, Sunday School, a Dorcas Society, Bible classes for ladies, another for gentlemen and a policy of calling house to house all before the church was built or consecrated.⁴¹³

As in Agra and Simla, and in keeping with the priorities of the CMS, Gaster built a school before he built a church building. Education and the elevation of the downtrodden had always been included in the original vision for the ‘project’. The school could be used all through the week, and was intended to be a venue for a Sunday School, part of the Sunday School movement which was providing education as well as spiritual mentoring to children and adults free of charge. The site was also being transformed, and in only eleven months the new school was ready and they

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 21. The Dorcas societies were ministries organised by women to serve the poor women of their district.

could move in. This provided space for 200 on a Sunday but the growth was so rapid that an extension was added even as the finishing touches were about to be made, and they enlarged the school to make room for 300.

The growth of the congregation surprised even Gaster, who in the previous three years had seen his preaching attract large crowds in Camberwell and Clapham, and who had addressed 1700 outdoors in India. He will not allow the reader 30 years later to overlook the exceptional statistics, which in his mind, point out the favour of God upon this missionary project: 'July 1866 — five adults and a few children, by Dec 1867 there were 300 adults and 150 children at Sunday School.' The Church of All Saints was finally consecrated on 24 July 1872 by the Bishop of Winchester, 'six years and three weeks from the day on which I first held divine service in this parish, in my own hired house, 60 Choumert Road.'⁴¹⁴

An organ was bought later for £250 + £40 for some extra stops, and a boundary wall was built onto Blenheim Grove. The Creed, Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments were displayed at the front 'according to the law of the Church of England', painted on stucco which then decayed and had to be replaced with stone and metal. As regards church endowment, this was modest, at only £33 per annum towards the vicar's stipend, and £5 for repairs.⁴¹⁵ In 1873, the year after the consecration of the church, mission rooms in Victoria Place were bought, and soon after the adjoining cottage, which then hosted a new Sunday School to which 150 children attended weekly on top of those meeting in the main Sunday School on Blenheim Grove.

The development of a congregation moved from nascent to institutional forms during the early years of establishment of a congregation, in a manner predicted by Warner's congregational models: 'Religious life has two forms: a ritualistic, differentiated, or institutional form; and an effervescent, holistic, or nascent form. The nascent state is found in out-of-the-way places like storefronts and weekday home prayer meetings.'⁴¹⁶ Gaster moved from eager door-knocking in the neighbourhood and services in his own sitting room to more settled establishment in a matter of years.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴¹⁶ Warner, *New Wine in Old Wineskins*, p. 35.

The establishment phase was arrived at through the pragmatism of an experienced pioneer of social projects, and with settled convictions as to church furnishings and architecture that would support and reinforce evangelical forms of worship. By contrast, in the nascent phase Gaster was content to gather around a hand organ in a room covered with rush matting. The dual mandate of regeneration which he had adopted as a CMS missionary, especially with regards to education is seen by his construction of a set of school rooms which predate the building of the church. It is clear that the involvement of a vicar in practical details, including legal drafting, contract negotiations and fundraising were entirely within the remit of the church leader within new parochialism as they were required for the pioneer missionary. Moreover, Gaster's reliance on patronage from lay leaders, as well as his enthusiasm for quantifying and collecting data, and for chronicling achievements suggests schooling in Henry Venn's articulation of the voluntary mission model. Less consultative than the nonconformist, and more independently minded than the Broad churchmen, Thomas Gaster now had to lead a recently nascent evangelical congregation into a new parochialism now furnished with all the indicators of religion in its institutional form; district, parish and building, and this would be a new battle.

Chapter 4

Thomas Gaster and All Saints Peckham

Beyond Nativity: 1874-1909

For Gaster, successful mission work needed to bear in mind several factors. The talents, gifts, service and even connections of specific individuals were vital; so too were maintaining certain inviolable theological principles, and finally taking best practice from where it could be found. Mission was considered to belong to the whole people of God and not for the priests of the experts in isolation.⁴¹⁷ This earliest stage in the work attracted other people who would be lay pioneers, staying with the work and the church for many years. In 1896, writing his *Brief History* he mentions the names of those still known to the congregation who joined in the first weeks:

Sister Agnes - was playing the harmonium, Mr Pett - later became Superintendent of Boys Sunday School, Miss Armstrong-superintended the Girls School. (To her mainly is due the growth and organisation of the Girls Sunday School; she will never be forgotten here.) Miss Legge (now Mrs Marsh) - superintended the Mission Hall Sunday School and organised it. Miss White and her mother (Mrs White), Mr H. S. Fitter and Mr B. R. Ketchlee who became the 1st churchwarden.

As the CMS founders maintained that it was the duty of every Christian to share the gospel with all people, so we can see this was carried through into the daily life of the congregation, not just through the preaching and theological aspirations of the leader, but by those engaging in youth and children's work and in other ministry. This was not just an aspiration but, according to W. R. Matthews, a schoolboy member of the congregation, a realised theology of every member ministry, and lay behind the name 'All Saints' which to the Protestants signified a rejection of the reverence, veneration

⁴¹⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 467f.

or intercession of saints, in favour of declaring that all Christian believers were saints. This ministry of the whole people of God was focussed towards mission and evangelism:

The outstanding merit of All Saints in my days was that it was wholeheartedly evangelistic and every worshipper was urged to take some part in proclaiming the gospel. To anticipate some years, when I was confirmed at about the age of fifteen, a lay-man, a remarkable man named Brown, approached me with an alarming challenge, 'Now that you have become a full member of the church, what are you going to do to witness for Christ?'⁴¹⁸

The slightly unwilling schoolboy was persuaded to do a reading for the regular Sunday evening street outreach service. This kind of activism and the concept of every member ministry did not appear to instil in the congregation or even in the pastor a sombre demeanour, as might be assumed from other descriptions. The lay leader, Mr Brown, is warmly described:

He does not fit into the pattern which 'progressive' religious commentators have of earnest Evangelical laymen at the end of the 19thc. Mr Brown was neither stuffy nor reactionary; I suppose, because he was superintendent of the Sunday School, that he accepted the fundamentalist theology which he heard from the pulpit, but his social and political views were radical and, to me, sometimes startling. Who in a discussion concerning the poor was remembered to have said 'there are only two things that keep this country from revolution, religion and beer, and both are getting weaker.'⁴¹⁹

Cox demonstrates the equally pervasive role of Sunday Schools and church work in the activities of local communities in Lambeth.⁴²⁰ Williams suggests that in Southwark the role of Sunday Schools in the rise of new parochialism should not be

⁴¹⁸ W. R. Matthews, *Memories and Meanings* (London, 1969), p. 24.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society*, pp. 267-269.

underestimated, but argues that this was often ‘religion by deputy’ where deep affection for these Sunday School teachers was much commented upon, and that by the 1880s had crystallised a concept of ‘our church’, and that by this stage local vicars or missionaries had been accepted as benevolent figures within the community.⁴²¹ This is certainly observable at All Saints, which by 1881 was flourishing numerically and was free from debt. Gaster the activist had been working tirelessly for fifteen years without a curate, preaching twice every Sunday, and praised his wife for her hard work in the parish, and also the churchwardens and the Sunday School Superintendent. It afforded Gaster an opportunity to start to focus on issues not immediately pressing upon the establishment and survival of this congregation.

Thus, on 19 November 1881, at the first annual meeting of the newly founded Church Association, Peckham recorded support from St James’ Hatcham, a ‘notoriously turbulent parish’. In 1882, South London Press reported a long lecture given by Gaster on ‘Communion or Mass’, which was listened to ‘with rapt attention by a crowded audience’.⁴²²

Though much can be learned of Gaster's theology and practise and the nature of the congregational life by the primary sources of the *Brief History*, something can also be gleaned from direct contemporaneous secondary sources or voices, which, though brief, are informative. Matthews comments on the similarity between Rye Lane Chapel (the main Baptist Church of Peckham) and All Saints, the Anglican equivalent several hundred yards away:

I went with her [his teacher], after careful consideration by my parents, to the Baptist Chapel in Rye Lane, Peckham, under that time under the ministry of the popular preacher named Ewing. Alas I have no recollection of the service or the sermon, except the sermon was longer and the hymns were louder than in All Saints. And indeed there was not any very marked difference between the outward forms of the services, except that the vicar wore a white surplice when he read prayers and a black gown when he preached, while Mr Ewing wore a

⁴²¹ S. C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880-1939*, p. 135-137.

⁴²² South London Press, 14 April 1882.

black gown all the time - or was it a frock coat? I really do not remember.⁴²³

Rye Lane Chapel was one of several flourishing Nonconformist chapels which had not waned in the face of a growing Anglican presence in the community, still registering 1705 attenders on any given Sunday in 1901.⁴²⁴ His description of All Saints is informative here on two counts, firstly, it chimes with Gaster's self-description in *Brief History*, and secondly the similarity between All Saints and a Nonconformist congregation echoes with the intentions of the Clapham initiators, to which All Saints owed so much. There existed amongst evangelicals of different denominational persuasions and convictions an underlying unity of purpose and method, and that the similarities were more fundamental than liturgical appearances. These gave rise to both the BMS and the CMS, to joint mission and prayer activities both home and abroad, and to similarities in worship style and doctrine: 'Clapham had hoped to serve as an agent to unite dissenters and High Churchmen into one church of "real" — Evangelical — Christians.'⁴²⁵ Of Gaster, Matthew writes:

All Saints in Blenheim Grove, which my parents and many of the friends helped to build, had, and still has an extreme Evangelical C. of E. colour. There I preached my first sermon after being ordained deacon and was glad to be allowed to do so, because of earlier associations and many old friends who were still faithful to it; but I had long revolted against its teaching and the long process of 'liberating' myself, as it seems to me now, was a decisive phase in my mental and spiritual growth... All Saints, when I was christened in it and for several years subsequently had a forceful vicar, T. J. Gaster, who had been a missionary in India and never failed to keep the missionary cause constantly before his congregation.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Matthews, *Memories and Meanings*, p. 23.

⁴²⁴ Beasley, *Peckham and Nunhead Churches*, p. 81.

⁴²⁵ S. Meacham, 'The Evangelical Inheritance', *The Journal of British Studies*, 3 (1) (University of Chicago Press: November 1963), pp. 88-104 (p.99). Atherstone makes it clear, however that the identification of Churchmanship with Evangelicalism was also contested. A. Atherstone, 'Anglican Evangelicalism' in R. Strong (ed), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Vol III. Partisan Anglicanism and Its Global Expansion, 1829- c.1914* (Oxford, 2017), p. 184.

⁴²⁶ Matthews, *Memories and Meanings*, p. 24.

Standish Meacham says this description of zeal was somewhat typical of a certain type of evangelical brought up within the ethos and values of the Clapham movement, and for whom evangelicalism was less a system than a remedy. It was a sense of progression, starting with the soul, working out to bring comfort to others, and then in steps including prayers in the family, religious topics of conversations with friends, teaching and training the poor at home and finally the work of mission amongst the unreached in other countries of the world.⁴²⁷

Within the established church, the orthodox and evangelical differed fundamentally, ‘as solemn triflers differ from the profoundly serious’ and that inside the evangelical there burned ‘that caloric – the vital heat of the soul itself’.⁴²⁸ Matthews, as an Anglican, brought up within the congregation, also supports Meacham’s thesis that a generational slide occurred between the first generation Clapham agitators and their direct inheritors, such as Samuel Wilberforce. Balleine calls them the ‘third generation’, naming the fathers who had fought under Whitfield and Wesley, the sons who gathered around Clapham, and then the third generation who took up and completed the work of Clapham.⁴²⁹ And the work of Clapham was local and global, parochial and missional, it was a lived-out paradigm with an extensive reach.

Gaster was something of a ‘true son’ of Clapham against the natural genetic inheritors such as Samuel Wilberforce who remained orthodox but could no longer hold the zealous convictions of their parents’ generation. Matthews demonstrated the same theological drift away from evangelicalism in Gaster’s own church, though in Gaster’s instance his ‘true son’ in the flesh, Percy, was also his ‘true son’ in the faith and helped him run the parish in later years. Matthews reflects on his journey of disassociation with evangelicalism of the preceding era:

Mr Gaster was a diligent, zealous and eloquent man, but he was a fanatical believer in a rigid Calvinistic type of Protestant theology. Thus it came about that, when my mind was on the point of waking and putting to itself questions of great moment, the sermons to which I

⁴²⁷ Meacham, ‘The Evangelical Inheritance’, p. 91.

⁴²⁸ J. Stephen, ‘The ‘Evangelical Succession’, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, II (London, 1850), p. 155.

⁴²⁹ Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party* (London, 1908), pp. 187ff.

listened to with a real desire to learn were too often powerful statements of dogmas, which I had to free myself from in order to think as a boy who would be a man of the 20th Century.⁴³⁰

With regards to missionary outlook, Gaster can be seen to have much in common with the low-church evangelicalism of the city missions, such as the London City Mission. Evangelicalism as demonstrated through Gaster and All Saints from the 1860s right to the turn of the century is the primary identifier of party, the denominational allegiance is always secondary, though the battle to save the Church of England is always before his mind. The difference in churchmanship was an identifying factor for the congregation within their context. This was commented upon by Matthews in later years:

In our Low Church ceremonial, no surpliced choir was tolerated and no solemn entry of choir and clergy; the officiating cleric was preceded to the reading desk by the churchwardens and to my eyes, it seemed that they released him from the organ.

Gaster and All Saints are described as evangelical, missionary-minded, extreme evangelical, rigid Calvinistic and fundamentalist.⁴³¹ Was Gaster a fundamentalist or an evangelical? Two areas need to come under consideration — his approach to the Bible, and his dealings with ritualism. J. I. Packer says of the term ‘fundamentalism’:⁴³²

We have used it thus far as a synonym for evangelicalism, because, whether the critics know it or not, it is evangelicalism that they are attacking under this name. But the title is one which most British evangelicals have always declined. However, as we have seen, it is currently used in very varied senses.

⁴³⁰ Matthews, *Memories and Meanings*, p. 25.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² G. M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp. 9-61.

But he goes on to renounce the use of the term most vehemently:

British evangelicals are not fundamentalists in any of the other senses that have been put on the word. Nor have they ever adopted the name, or asked to be called by it; and sometimes they have explicitly rejected it. There are good reasons why they should continue to do so. To persons ignorant of the American debate about 'the fundamentals' (as most Englishmen are) the word can convey no obvious meaning.

Packer rejects the term for its pejorative sense: 'In the first place, it is a word that combines the vaguest conceptual meaning with the strongest emotional flavour'. 'Fundamentalist' has long been a term of ecclesiastical abuse, a theological swear-word; and the important thing about a swear-word, of course, is not what it means but the feelings it expresses. Packer also rejects the term because 'the name suggests evangelicalism at something less than its best', especially in terms of anti-intellectualism in its approach to science and culture.⁴³³ Thirdly, Packer and Stott rejected the inaccuracy of the term, both historically and theologically.⁴³⁴ Stott suggested that there was a polemical agenda in play for those still wishing to conflate the terms.⁴³⁵ He lists ten tendencies in which fundamentalism and evangelicalism differ: their relation to human thought, their attitudes to the nature of the Bible, biblical inspiration, biblical interpretation, the ecumenical movement, the church, the world, race, Christian mission and Christian hope. In terms of the three biblical and hermeneutical tendencies, Stott claimed with reference to biblical inspiration, that fundamentalists tend to a verbal dictation view of Scripture, whereas evangelicals believe in double authorship — that 'the divine author spoke through the human authors while they were in full possession of their faculties.' In relation to biblical interpretation the ideal evangelical would 'struggle with the task of cultural transposition of the text' from its original setting to the present day, whereas a fundamentalist might apply the text directly to themselves without acknowledging the

⁴³³ Packer, *Fundamentalism*, p. 24, 30, 31, 32.

⁴³⁴ McGrath, *J. I. Packer*, pp. 80-88; Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, pp. 16-27.

⁴³⁵ Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 'Evangelical Christians are understandably dismayed by such books as *Fundamentalism* by Professor James Barr and *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* by Bishop Jack Spong, which whether from ignorance, misunderstanding or malice, perpetuate the old identification,' p. 21.

interpretive gulf. With regards to the nature of the Bible, some fundamentalists could be accused of ‘excessive literalism’, as if ‘every word of the Bible is literally true’, whereas evangelicals affirm the role of the figurative and the poetic yet maintain the thoroughgoing truthfulness of the text.⁴³⁶

Matthews took exception to the biblicism of his former vicar and focussed his criticisms on Gaster's interpretations of Genesis:

Mr Gaster believed in the verbal inspiration of the whole Bible and was unfortunately persuaded that it was his duty not only to hold, but to defend by argument, the literal accuracy of every word in it. He had a lecture on Noah and the Ark, in which he dealt with the obvious difficulty of conceiving a vessel which would float on the waves of the deluge and contain two at least of every species of living being on the earth.⁴³⁷

Although this would appear to suggest, in this instance, that Gaster was displaying signs of fundamentalism, this issue of interpretation here is one of biblical intention. Clearly, the absolute truthfulness of Scripture is affirmed by both parties, and was fervently defended by Gaster. There is evidence elsewhere in a brief comment Gaster made after a lecture given by a fellow clergyman in London in 1895 that Gaster did maintain unswervingly to the ‘absolute and undoubted faith in the Old and New Testament Scriptures’ as being ‘from God alone’ and that this has profound influence on his creation views:

I was so glad to hear that remark made by the Chairman, I think, that it was such a false notion that the human race had begun in a state of degradation, and that we had been working up, better and better, from that time to the present. What the Word of God states is that God put man upon the earth and made him perfect, and that it has been a gradual downward path that they have travelled upon, who have never had the revelation from God to keep them in the right way, and the

⁴³⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴³⁷ Matthews, *Memories and Meanings*, p. 26.

practical conclusion for us is this — that so long as we have, as I trust I have, absolute and undoubted faith in the Old and New Testament Scriptures and in them only, as from God alone, the moment we get away from that we ourselves begin, in proportion to the distance which we remove from it, to become more and more degraded in our own minds.⁴³⁸

Gaster was unwavering in his belief in the trustworthiness of Scripture and scriptural truth, though the language he himself uses is less rigid preferring to describe his principle as ‘I preached and taught always only what is contained in Holy Scripture’.⁴³⁹ This was surely an ideal, for it ignores the complexities of interpretation for exegesis and application. Also of note in this interjection is the context, for the comment is given at the Victoria Institute, founded to discuss recent discoveries in the sciences and explore them in relation to revelation. This lecture on anthropology suggests that by the 1890’s many conservative-minded Christians held to a degenerationist rather than a developmental view of human spirituality and progress.⁴⁴⁰ This philosophical view was seen to be reinforced by the shock of disorganised urbanisation and the squalor of the slums, as well as the moral panic that accompanied a response to the conditions of the poor. Though there were various responses to this collapse of the cities, such as the new emphasis on physical exercise, or the new spiritual war against sin characterised by the Salvation Army, the backdrop was shared by many evangelicals. Theologically evangelicals did not regard the world as the result of a rational order of general laws, but as a potential chaos, to which all would quickly return without salvation and sanctification.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ M. Eells, ‘The Worship and Traditions of the Aborigines of the Islands of the Pacific Ocean’, *Transcripts Victoria Institute*, 32 (London, 1900), read before the Victoria Institute by Rev. J. W. McCleod on 18 March 1895. Rev. T. J. Gaster cited in ‘Comments’ (p. 78). The Victoria Institute published a journal for the transmission of recent research from science into the realm of faith: ‘The tendency of the Victoria Institute’s work has been to bring about a truer appreciation of the results of scientific inquiry, and those results have been to demonstrate that there is an absence of opposition between Science and Religion. The Institute was founded, not for the purpose of proving that current science and revelation are in accord, but to examine science generally, and more especially any theories which are alleged to contradict Revelation. There are too many who seek to make every passing phase of scientific research and enquiry square with Revelation, and are alarmed if they are unsuccessful, ignoring the fact that science is always advancing, and therefore must ever be changing its aspects; and again, that mistakes may be made in the interpretation of the words of Revelation.’ p. 2.

⁴³⁹ *Brief History*, p. 22.

⁴⁴⁰ Erdozain, *Problem of Pleasure*, p. 163-170, speaks of the statistics of Sin and vice and the regenerative power of sport and exercise to counteract this degeneration.

⁴⁴¹ Walker, *Pulling the Devils Kingdom Down*, pp. 181-183.

One must conclude in this instance the argument proposed in the introduction that Gaster's ministry was thriving in an era before the fundamentalists could be easily distinguished from evangelicals — that distinction was only possible without anachronisms following the publication in America of *The Fundamentals* by Lyman and Milton Stewart between 1909 and 1915.

The second aspect of Gaster's theology to which Matthews took exception was his Low-Church Protestantism, and particularly Gaster's stance on the Roman Catholic Church and ritual and his giving of Church Association lectures:⁴⁴²

One of these lectures was 'The Wreck of the Ritualists on the Rock of Rome' in which he elaborated the idea that the Pope is the Antichrist, though I felt that perhaps a stronger case could be made for the view that he is the Man of Sin. Remember that the prevailing opinion of the religious people whom I knew and loved was that the Roman Catholic worship is idolatry and that it was better to be an atheist than a Papist. I had a hot argument with the vicar's son on this when he maintained that it is better to have no God than a false God.⁴⁴³

So, despite being described by a critic's voice as earnest, zealous, extreme evangelical and Calvinistic, there was still warmth left for Gaster and the congregation. Other sources confirm that hard-working and zealous were accurate descriptions of the man, but there also seemed to be humour, and an attention to detail in the lives of his parishioners, instilled through the work of parish visiting, of which he was a committed believer — even using this as a test case of whether a parish leadership was serious about 'winning souls'. Gaster, whether in Simla, Camberwell, Clapham or Peckham took the practice of visiting to heart, and ensured that if he was not able to fulfill the function, that the parish could be divided into smaller units and the

⁴⁴² Matthews, *Memories and Meanings*, e.g. 'A fixed idea in the circles of my youthful fellow-believers, students and their pastors was that the Pope is Antichrist and that the "Puseyites", which was the customary denigrating appellation of the High Church, Anglo-Catholics and disciples of the Oxford Movement, were either dupes or Jesuits who, by hypocritical intrusion into the ministry of the Protestant Church, were working to overthrow the Church of England and undo the work of the glorious Reformation. Mr Gaster was no less ardent in this field of controversy than in that of the authority of Scripture and he prepared two lectures on this theme which were at least equal in entertainment value to that on Noah's Ark.' p. 26.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

responsibility delegated to committed and mature Christian believers who would discharge this pastoral and evangelistic task with efficiency and care.

Thomas Gaster, though of singular dedication and zeal was not, and never understood himself to be, fighting a battle alone against the forces of ritualism, worldliness and Anti-Christ. Fighting the twin threats of the Broad Church with its emerging liberalism and the High Church with its resurgent ritualism is part of this story. For Gaster, it was not enough to have clarity about what one believed in theory and practice, but it was of paramount importance that one worked and preached against errors.

Several references in the South London Press make it clear that it was for these pronouncements, as much as the growth of the church and the preaching of the gospel that Gaster was renowned, but that in the Nonconformist norm of burgeoning South London, it was the fervent Protestantism in an Anglican clergyman that so endeared him to fellow evangelicals, even as it may have alienated him from fellow members and clergy of the established church.⁴⁴⁴

Over several years all the local press references to All Saints, excepting two comments about pretty church decorations over Christmas, are about Gaster and his links to the Church Association. In June 1880 he ‘attacks ritualism’ and it is commented upon in the letters page, in November of the same year he chairs the first meeting of the Camberwell and Peckham branch of the Church Association in the All Saints school room. The following year (6 August 1881) a presentation is made to Gaster by the chairman of the Association for his ‘fearless denunciation of ritualistic error’. As Maughan rightly points out, the theological differences between High and Low Anglican culture became institutionally fixed and opposed from the late 1860s at a national and even international level. Opposing views, both ritualistic and evangelical, had corresponding local English organisations as well as missionary organisations, thereby running parallel tracks with local and parochial expression and with global reach. For the Anglican evangelicals, these institutional organs would have been CMS for overseas mission, The Church Association for debate, and CPAS

⁴⁴⁴ South London Press (refs. 1870-1883) 26 November 1870; 3 December 1870; 27 July 1872; 27 April 1878; 12 June 1880; 6 November 1880; 6 August 1881; 19 November 1881; 31 December 1881; 14 April 1882.

for home mission; and the ritualists had the English Church Union (previously the Church of England Protection Society) and SPG.⁴⁴⁵ The Church Association lectures were considered the appropriate platform for handling such debates, and to a certain extent this kept the pulpits of Peckham more focussed on scriptural themes.

Several years later the lectures were still going strong. In 1889 the programme included (21 January) 'Who is the Bishop of Rome?'; (25 February) 'Superstition'; (2 April) 'Priests Ancient and Modern'; and also several lectures on missionary themes such as (22 October 1889) 'The Hill Tribes of India'. 1890 follows a similar pattern — statements and lectures concerning current controversies and debates within the Church of England, missionary items and the occasional paper on one-off interesting topics. The popularity of these lectures, which were given on top of two lengthy sermons every Sunday, and sometimes several sermons to children, young people, or in the mission hall, confirms our image of a man working tirelessly for his cause. Members of the association were expected to subscribe to a fund and to give for the lectures, and the sums went towards the furtherance of mission and theological aims. 'I am delighted to mark the interest', Gaster writes in the annual address of 1889, 'my people take in lectures on thoroughly historical and religious subjects. Our large school has been several times crowded, once a number of people could not find room.'⁴⁴⁶

The marked manner of debate over ritualism permeates the annual addresses regardless of which year is selected. The plot in this story is about the flourishing of mission both at home and abroad, a seriousness about God and his Word, a dedication to ministry towards children, a care for the poor and vulnerable, and a prophetic call to the peoples of the congregation to stand for scriptural and gospel truth against the pernicious errors of Rome and ritualism.

For All Saints, this story of a battle was told even as the church ministries went from strength to strength, numbers and attendance were duly noted and communicated to

⁴⁴⁵ Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good*, pp. 81-86; Chadwick, *Victorian Church, Part One*, pp. 250-71; N. Yates, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1999), Chapter 3; Stock, *History of the CMS*, 2:348; J. Bentley, *Ritualism and Politics in Victorian Britain.: The Attempt to Legislate for Belief* (Oxford, 1978), p. 20, 37-40.

⁴⁴⁶ T. J. Gaster, Twenty-Third Annual Address, January 1890, p. 7.

bolster enthusiasm and support. The names of individuals, wardens and superintendents of Sunday School are also given bold credit, and yet this is often communicated as an urgent struggle in the face of many enemies:

The Bible classes are far larger than in any previous year; Mr Jones's class for gentlemen has upwards of fifty members; mine, for ladies, has eighty. No new form, rite, or ceremony has been introduced or even thought of. The prosperity of God's work here in this evil age is a standing testimony for the simple Truth of the Gospel, and a visible witness against the sin of Popery which so greatly leavens many congregations of our dear Church of England.⁴⁴⁷

Two more observations might be made at this stage from the evidential voices of publicity and finances. Firstly, although some level of local fame or notoriety was given to Gaster, and though there was evident deep affection between Gaster and 'his people' the finances of the church seemed open, accountable and uncontrolled by the founding father. All church finances were subdivided into individual funds, each with their own treasurer, and with a public list of subscribers and donors. The funds for Church Missionary Society, district visiting and care for the poor always outstripped those for the Church Association, and regularly triumphed over the maintenance of the buildings and site also. An indication of sums raised by subscription in any given year during the 1880s and 1890s was in the region of: District Visiting Society (£116); Church Missionary Society (£88); Mothers' Meeting (£22); Sunday Schools (£110); Church Association (£16); and curate's stipend fund (£180) and church expenses (£180).⁴⁴⁸

Secondly, mission and the needs of the district and the running and thriving of a local congregation were always primary and regardless of the popularity of the lectures, Sunday attendance for all age groups was much higher. The way the finances were run allowed Gaster to lead by moral and personal example, but the general running of the church and her interests was already firmly in the hands of a committed and equipped laity by 1889 at any rate.

⁴⁴⁷ T. J. Gaster, Twenty- Fourth Annual Address, January 1891, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 17-43.

The voices singing the Church Association tune were harmonious for All Saints, in no way discordant with the views of the congregation, and well attuned to the wider community of Peckham and Dulwich with a vibrant Nonconformist life. This plotline of noble struggle and the courageous battle for gospel truth and the Protestant nature of the Church of England, is a crucial aspect of the narrative framework of All Saints Peckham. The cause of God and the countervailing powers are acknowledged and so too are the zeal and energy of the missionary-minded founding father, and this engaged the energies of a congregation to take responsibility and give generously in time and money to the aims of the church. The story demands a low-church authenticity in message, method and medium, and yet it is told, through Gaster, with much warmth and affection. Even the opposing voices, such as Matthews', provide grudging admiration for what is perhaps 'a work of God'.

Narrative Leadership of Thomas Gaster

Hopewell suggests that a Christian congregation will:

...use forms and stories common to a larger world treasury to create its own local religion of outlooks, action patterns, and values. Ministry in even a small church occurs in a much more abundant world of signals and images than I, and I suspect others, had assumed.⁴⁴⁹

It is the contention of this thesis, that a leader within a parish is best understood in context through interpreting the semiotic system which is constructed, enacted and confirmed through narrative of heroism, history and hope. For the Victorian in the new parochial system, this was a world signalled by the missionary dynamics of the empire transplanted to the home context. Deeply emotive and competing cultures in creative tension were held and reinforced by models of congregation, theology and leadership. Polarities were harnessed and inhabited; heroes and villains, loyal friends and betraying enemies provided the drama; themes of destruction and construction; pioneering alterity and establishment conformity provided the context; and the individual characters and leaders weave their way through this rich socio-spiritual environment to create congregational life.

⁴⁴⁹ Hopewell, *Congregation*, p. 3.

Leadership through narrative was demonstrated in Gaster's Indian missionary phase, in a manner which is both discovered and learned. Both involve certain symbolic motifs, some of which are carried into London. The 'Grand Narrative' of the salvation story itself places scripture passages in context, and sets the boundaries of genre and scope of author's intention. Mission narrative often drew on the book of Acts. For Luke and the gospel writers, mission and kerygma were best understood and communicated within narrative and through narrative, and Acts has been a sourcebook for mission methodology and the narrative structure of Acts encouraged missionaries to find commonality.⁴⁵⁰ Ben Witherington proposes that Luke-Acts is a rich single narrative with particular foci:

One can say then that the Gospel focuses on the vertical (up and down the social scale) universalisation of the Gospel, while Acts focuses on its horizontal universalisation (to all peoples throughout the Empire).⁴⁵¹

In India, with this in mind, he wrote his missionary journals, and also reflected upon his own leadership role with reference to the apostle Paul, and in Peckham he became narrator and leader of the church, and chief interpreter of the story of salvation as well as the story of congregation. These two stories are unified in one narrator, announcer, proclaimer and interpreter, but they are also intertwined theologically. Evangelical soteriology had both objective content and subjective implications. This dual narrative approach to salvation involves a dual habitation, living in the text and embedded in the urban context. Neither of these two understandings of salvation are symbolic, both connotations of salvation inform one another. One is proclaimed as kerygma, the narrator stating with certainty the content of gospel and reinforcing the manner and method of salvation through faith. But the leader-narrator also serves a story of salvation by articulating and reinforcing the lived effect of salvation, explaining and celebrating salvation embodied in a specific local Christian congregation. He does not attempt to offer a disinterested discourse, and is not

⁴⁵⁰ See M. Green, *Thirty Years that Changed the World: The Book of Acts for Today* (Grand Rapids, 2004), pp. 116-139; C. Van Engen, *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission* (Monrovia, 2000).

⁴⁵¹ B. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Carlisle, 1998), p. 69.

seeking disinterested appreciation. The story he tells is not only his story, it is also their story. As founder of the congregation he speaks of their shared human history, and sets a framework for identity which is intended to frame future discourse and authenticity. As Standish suggests, this ability to tell and craft stories is integral to accomplished congregational leadership, and presents struggles within a larger plotline:

Great leaders don't even talk so much in terms of goals and aims. Instead, great leaders seem to craft a story, a story that inspires others in the organisation, team or congregation so that they willingly become a part of and live out this story in their work and their lives. Great leaders, through their whole style of leadership, tell a story about the organisation or congregation that becomes a blueprint for its ongoing growth.⁴⁵²

The richness of the story, and the interspection of the historian provides a series of other story-telling voices which harmonise or dissonate with the lead vocal. But the story of All Saints as a congregation is dramatic, not prosaic; there were protagonists, forces and heroes, a fight and a family. For Gaster there was a story of finality and freedom in reaching what appears to be a life destiny in founding and leading 'his congregation' under the grace of God. There is providence, but harmony comes from within the congregation following a great sense of leadership, excitement and enthusiasm. And though the story of congregation is not finished, and the interpretation has only just begun anew — in both re-telling and re-interpreting the tales of the past, we need to be observant of and conversant with the resonating motifs and symbolic structure, a web of significance, which belongs to the congregation.

A congregation is held together by much more than creeds, governing structures and programs. At a deeper level, it is implicated in the symbols and signals of the world, gathering and grounding them in the congregations own idiom.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² N. G. Standish, 'Pastor as Narrative Leader' in L. A. Golemon (ed.), *Living out our story, Narrative Leadership and Congregational Culture* (Herdon, 2010), p. 70.

⁴⁵³ Hopewell, *Congregation*, p. 5.

And therefore the researcher and the historian is well advised to attend, as Timothy Larsen suggests, to what the Victorians themselves found interesting rather than primarily to interrogate them for our own interests.⁴⁵⁴ One danger of this approach to Victorian congregations is to judge a measure of success or failure, according to the expansionist rhetoric of the leaders of their age. As Cox warns; ‘Religion was more important in late Victorian society than many contemporary observers would allow, and the unrealistic hopes and expectations, and inaccurate visions of a religious past have obscured that importance.’⁴⁵⁵

There are three things which need to be maintained for an assessment of congregational symbol; the first is that a congregation has operant belief discerned in action, role and status. The belief of a congregation will always cluster around rather than stand upon formalised credal statements, and at times will bear a very loose relationship to them. Wade Clark Roof suggests that:

...theological doctrines are always filtered through peoples’ social and cultural experiences. What emerges in any given situation as ‘operant religion’ will differ considerably from the formal religion of historic creeds, and more concern with the former is essential to understanding how belief systems function in people’s daily lives.⁴⁵⁶

The second observation is that individual congregations are dynamic and not static, spread systemically across a continuum of retrospection, conformity and ideation. In contemporary reflection on congregation this is sometimes phrased as the tension and dynamic between the settlers and the pioneers, or between the normal and the eccentric.⁴⁵⁷ And thirdly, congregations are unique, they are heterogeneous. And while much can be gained from the incisive generalisations of theorists and historians, this is often undermined in the particular against the trend. To the theologian and the researcher of congregation the differences are often more interesting than the

⁴⁵⁴ T. Larsen, *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford, 2011), p. 1-10.

⁴⁵⁵ Cox, *The English Churches*, p. 268.

⁴⁵⁶ W. C. Roof, *Community and Commitment: Religious Plausability in a Liberal Protestant Church* (New York, 1978), pp. 178-179; Hopewell, *Congregation*, p. 18.

⁴⁵⁷ Warner, *New Wine in New Wineskins*, pp. 285, 288; Jackson, *Hope for the Church*, p. 175.

similarities.⁴⁵⁸ The symbols and signals of this ideational world of All Saints are well represented for us in the iconography and the visual and symbolic data of the church. Thomas Gaster's silver tint photographic portrait,⁴⁵⁹ depicts him as a trusted and learned handler of the Word of God. [Fig. 16.] He is dressed in the Protestant gown of the evangelical preacher. The symbolism of this portrait is of interest — shown with right hand leaning upon the chair by his preaching desk, from which he gave Sunday evening lectures. Here is leader as theologian, but a theologian shown not in the study, but as a teacher, and holding one book. The iconography is important. The mark of the authority of the evangelical leader is Bible and not episcopacy, learning and not priesthood. This picture was commissioned to be hung publicly in the vestry of All Saints Church.

Larsen asserts that the Victorians, of whatever theological or confessional persuasion, were still essentially 'people of one book', whose symbolic universe was governed by one text beyond all others. Whether in Pusey or Dickens, Ruskin or Spurgeon, the cultural universe was governed by the rotation and gravitational pull of this sole ideographical weight: 'The Bible provided an essential set of metaphors and symbols. Scriptural knowledge is a pre-requisite for entering into a Victorian author's imaginative world.'⁴⁶⁰

A further image explores this icon in heroic form as father, founder and protagonist. Commemorative plates were made in 1885, 23 years after the founding of All Saints. [Fig. 17.] These plates were intended to be hung on the walls of the parishioners. The commemorative plate was a well-established piece of Victorian culture. Queen Victoria's Jubilee was marked by a new round of fabrication and political and ecclesiastical leaders were commemorated once they had impacted popular culture. A similar plate was made, depicting Charles Spurgeon, who held a national symbolic role for the burgeoning Nonconformists. [Fig. 18.]⁴⁶¹ Affection and heroism afforded the production of such products, which in this case may have been to commemorate the twenty-year anniversary of Gaster's time in Peckham — 1882 — or his fiftieth

⁴⁵⁸ W. H. Anderson, 'The Local Congregation as a Subculture', *Social Compass*, 18 (1971), pp. 287-291.

⁴⁵⁹ Portrait, T. J. Gaster. All Saints PCC private collection.

⁴⁶⁰ Larsen, *People of One Book*, p. 4.

⁴⁶¹ [<http://www.museumoflondonprints.com/image/138399/unknown-commemorative-plate-featuring-reverend-c-h-spurgeon-19th-century>].

birthday which was also in 1882. It is likely that the confluence of these two anniversaries would have precipitated this commemorative plate, or perhaps a means of fundraising for a new church project, which was the stated reason for the publication of *A Brief History*. The inscription on the back, however, is for 1885, and therefore ought to be taken at face value given the lack of other corroborating evidence to the contrary. [Fig. 19.] Nevertheless, the commemorative plate for the congregation members surely establishes Gaster as a father and hero for the congregation, and not a simple functional and pastoral role.

Ammerman makes it clear how many churches of a conservative theological bent can relate to the power of the pastor in an affectionate and positive way, as an embodied locator of preaching, reading and culture. Security is found for these congregations, she argues, in trusting the pastor. Members say ‘I belong to Pastor Thompson’s church’ and even influential leaders choose to use their influence to ‘support the power of the pastor’.⁴⁶² Though there are indications, especially in the financial records of All Saints, that the power of the pastor was moderated, this power was perceived in the manner of hero and patron to enable success and the flourishing of the whole. While the hero battles foes on your behalf, in fighting ritualism through the Church Association, in mission through the Church Missionary Society, in science, through attendance at the Victoria Institute, and gives regular lectures on all these subjects, then the congregation are afforded security in a dynamic model. Added to this, the indigenisation in mission, which was a stated aim of CMS during Gaster’s time in power meant that Gaster was quick to release praise and productivity to the able and supportive lay members of the congregation, and in the community.

Gaster's leadership mentality, his self-motivation and strong personal convictions, meant he was used to conflict, but where his congregation agreed with the principles he had laid out, there was harmony, strong personal ties and a family atmosphere. In India, he was at odds with the Calcutta Committee, in Camberwell with a ‘high church party’ and in Clapham with the rector. In Peckham, there is no evidence of such conflict within All Saints, in part because neither the values for the congregation nor the authority were up for negotiation. Modern analysis might be uncomfortable

⁴⁶² Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, p. 120-133, especially pp. 123-125.

with such a model for leadership, and perhaps uneasy to see even in a local congregation commemorative plates produced with an image of the vicar reproduced to be hung on parlour wall or sitting room of the congregants. The annual reports up to his departure are 'to the members of his congregation' and beyond that era are published as 'of All Saints Church'. Becker's insights into congregational conflict suggest that churches with a strong 'leader' mentality have the lowest instances of internal conflict and strife.⁴⁶³ Gaster's successors did not so strongly identify with the community they were called to pastor, and neither, perhaps, did the congregation hold them in the same level of affection as they had done with their founder and father figure.

Further Narrative Themes for the Evangelical Anglican Missionary Congregation

Whether it is an inbuilt human passion for story or the specific examples of scriptural narrative which underpin evangelical missionary biographies is unclear, but by the late nineteenth century the lives and works of missionaries and Christian leaders were widely read. There are perhaps three main reasons for this. First, despite its emphasis on doctrine, evangelicalism has always been strongly influenced by extra-biblical narrative. In its first century, it transformed hagiographic literature, giving it a Protestant tilt in *Foxe's Acts and Monuments* and delighted in inheriting Bunyan's allegories *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War*. The lives of the European reformers themselves, especially Luther, Erasmus and Calvin, came to be read alongside their commentaries and systematic theology, which, in turn, exhorted their readers to read Augustine's *Confessions*. Wycliffe, Hus and Savonarola, as reforming leaders, came in from the sidelines of heresy and replaced the earlier Roman Catholic and mystic hagiographies to become the new heroic texts of Protestant Europe. For the Puritans, David Brainerd's journals and *The Life of David Brainerd* by Jonathan Edwards were enormously popular in the wider, international world of evangelicalism and formed through their narrative a framework of understanding of spirituality, mission methodology and even explained the physical manifestations

⁴⁶³ Becker, *Congregations*, p. 147.

during revival.⁴⁶⁴ Brainerd's life, writings and example became a model of a dedicated and zealous Christian life which others followed, and sought to emulate, and continue to do so. Those who publicly cited his work include Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Henry Martyn, William Carey, Robert Murray McCheyne, and Horatius Bonar.⁴⁶⁵ For the evangelical tradition, biographies and journals shaped and guided exposition and expectation of Christian life and discipleship, perhaps as much as the rich song tradition.⁴⁶⁶

Secondly, the importance of biographies and journals was also shaped by the expectation that a zealous Christian would guard his or her use of time. When it came to reading material, novels and newspapers were frowned upon by evangelical leaders like J. C. Ryle. Reading novels and romances was frivolous and an impious use of leisure time:

Books and Newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Macaulay or Dickens will pall on his ear. The most able article in the Times will fail to interest him. *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*, and the last new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded... There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible.⁴⁶⁷

However, Ryle counsels Victorian evangelicals to know their history, and to learn from the heroes of the faith. He goes further than this, by suggesting that they should be an inspiration for the present, and in so doing embodies an essentially positivist view of history. In a preface to a volume outlining the biographies of eleven evangelical leaders of the eighteenth century, he writes:

The reader will soon discover that I am an enthusiastic admirer of the men whose pictures I have sketched in this volume. I confess it honestly. I am a thorough enthusiast about them. I believe firmly that,

⁴⁶⁴ N. Pettit, *The Life of David Brainerd* (New Haven, 1985); D. Brainerd, *Memoirs of David Brainerd*, Volume X of *Works of President Edwards in Ten Volumes* (New York, 1830); J. Thornbury, *David Brainerd: Pioneer Missionary to the American Indians* (Darlington, 1996).

⁴⁶⁵ Thornbury, *David Brainerd*, pp. 293-305.

⁴⁶⁶ e.g. John Newton, *An Authentic Narrative* became a bestseller in 1764 even while it was still anonymous.

⁴⁶⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Practical Religion* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 91.

excepting Luther and his continental contemporaries and our own martyred reformers, the world has seen no such men since the days of the apostles.⁴⁶⁸

Thirdly, missionary biographies must be understood as part of the information sharing and inspiring for the missionary movement itself. The 'Great Century' was awash with missionary literature, through subscription magazines, books and pamphlets. Reports from the field were regular and detailed; letters were sent back and forth, taking full advantage of all the technological advances that the industrial age afforded. Home was more tangibly connected with the 'mission field' through face to face contact, and this tendency grew as the century progressed. The Cambridge Seven embarked upon a tour of the British universities before sailing for China and the Keswick Convention hosted missionaries on furlough who shared their experiences to a national audience.⁴⁶⁹

In *The Indian Missionary Manual*, Murdoch several times suggests edification and instruction through reading missionary biographies:

Biographies will also be found very useful, as those of Philip and Matthew Henry, Halyburton, Doddridge, Cotton Mather, Zinzendorff, Wesley, Whitefield, and McCheyne. The memoirs of Missionaries are valuable for different purposes, some as calculated to promote spirituality of mind, as those of Brainerd and Martyn; others for the insight they give into Mission work... Among Missionary biographies may be specially mentioned those of Swartz, Rhenius, Judson, Weitbrecht, Kagland, and Lacroix.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ J. C. Ryle, *Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1997), Preface of 1868, p. iv.

⁴⁶⁹ S. Maughan, *Mighty England do Good*, pp. 141-144, 151-160, 251, 252, 266-267, 281, 394.

⁴⁷⁰ Murdoch, *The Indian Missionary Manual*, p. 16, and full reading list appendix is from p. 562ff. Also mentions the important manuals for parish mission or ministry in British institutions abroad: "'True Yoke Fellows in the Mission Field', or the life of Anderson and Johnston, and the memoir of Noble, Baxter's 'Reformed Pastor', Bridges' 'Christian Ministry', 'Zeal in the Christian Ministry', by Dubois, Heard's 'Pastor and Parish', Wynne's 'Model Parish', Oxenden's 'Pastoral Office' &c, may be turned to excellent account." p. 120. Heard and Wynne's work were the result of a competition on the workings of the parochial system.

Bearing all this in mind, to a genteel and suburban congregation, the heroism of the returning missionary and explorer was a symbolic motivator. Gaster's enthusiasm for the cause of world missions and the needs of India were always kept in the minds, and more crucially the imaginations, of his congregation. In the tower of All Saints, this researcher discovered a magic lantern with missionary plates, enabling the school rooms of Peckham to be lit with the exotic imagination of the South Sea Islands and the distant shores of India.

The mission fields of the Empire invigorated and motivated to action a congregation which could have become fixated upon their own localised needs once the hard work of establishment had been completed. One of Gaster's personal mission heroes was Abdul Massih, one of the first Muslim converts in India through the ministry of , CMS missionaries and later an ordained Anglican Indian national. The new group in the Peckham congregation were named after him and called the Abdul Massihans, a team dedicated to regular public Scripture distribution, emulating the great hero of the faith, but also copying the example of scripture distribution in the markets that Gaster had himself employed in Agra. This was a congregation not given to racism, but to iconography. The contextualised use of the iconic figure of Abdul Massih by Gaster and his congregation makes clear another theme of normative parochial life — missionary heroes gave to English congregations an evangelical subtext and a counterstream to globalisation in the age of Empire. [Fig. 20.] ⁴⁷¹ It would be erroneous to assume that the Empire which fostered a climate of providence would lead to unthinking nationalisms and London-centric thinking. The returning missionary and vicar was able to furnish his congregation with a counter narrative which was global, dynamic and yet framed squarely within the evangelical paradigm, and supported by her symbols, stories and signs.

Sjoblom makes it clear that the global reach of mission was part of a thorough-going globalising force. Despite the biblicism of evangelical missionaries Sjoblom nevertheless insists on globalism as a driving force of evangelicalism:

⁴⁷¹ Abdul Masih (1776-1827): Henry Martyn's convert, CMS evangelist and the second ordained Indian Anglican. This watercolour by an unknown hand hangs in the office of the Director of the Henry Martyn Centre, where it is on permanent loan from Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Also G. Kings, 'Foundations for Mission and the Study of World Christianity: The Legacy of Henry Martyn B. D.', *Mission Studies*, 14 (1-2) (1997), pp. 248-65.

The outstanding characteristic of evangelicalism was the fusion of the biblical paradigm with prevailing ideas of progress, of global universalism, and of rational thought. In mission writings and stories the biblical cadence of missionary writings points to a transnational evangelical culture, with joint resonance and dependence on the same key texts, such as Acts 5:5, and Matthew 28:19.⁴⁷²

World missions were not just an activity of the local parish, they were a framing of the parish within her global context, and within the global identity and self-understanding of the missionising forces around the globe.

In His Own Words — Gaster Revisiting the Foundational Themes

Towards the end of his ministry, Gaster recalls what he believes to be the governing principles of the work which later became the church of All Saints. As to history, Gaster is recording the history of the congregation, particularly the circumstances surrounding the founding of the church, believing that this information is vital to the continuing vibrancy of the congregation. Though it is at times pedagogic, *The Brief History* has achieved its aims.

As to signs of his values in leadership, and his deft handling of financial matters and stewardship:

We resolved to be free from debt, and only built what we could afford. We only give to God's work, and therefore would tolerate no gambling, raffles or other fund-raising activities.

As to his values in the supremacy of Scripture, and a Protestant interpretive framework: 'I preached and taught always only what is contained in Holy Scripture. I warned people against Anti-Christ in the Established Church and elsewhere.' And as to the ethos of the church in terms of worship:

⁴⁷² G. Sjoblom, op. cit.

I maintained the simplicity of divine service, so that the most humble may have their rightful share in the service, of which they are often robbed by trained choirs, intoning, processions, gaudy robes, incense, candles, crosses, attitudes, pictures, crucifixes, and other baubles of vanity fair, after which the silly populace run; but we have not so learned Christ.⁴⁷³

Gaster was looking to voluntarism and not state intervention or clericalism for the future of the congregation. He was thinking about building a lasting work, of the future vicars to come, and what lessons he wanted them to remember. The church was not to be endowed or subsidised by the state, and neither had Gaster at any point in his ministry:

Some churches have been endowed but not All Saints Camberwell, future vicars will also have to rely on the goodwill and honour of those who attend...thus it will be seen we are as truly under 'the voluntary system' as the nonconformists are.⁴⁷⁴

In terms of mission, Gaster affirmed both the local and global aspects of the call, still even in his closing days being excited by evidence of God's work amongst his community. As Gaster reflected on the work 30 years later he also mentions the importance of vocations, foreign mission and local mission. Several had been ordained in the Church of England, including W. G. Jones, his first curate, and his son Percy, his last. Several had gone abroad as medical missionaries, including his son-in-law Rev. O. O. Williams and daughter Jane (a nurse), serving in Assam. As to the two-way traffic of mission, locally in Peckham outreach and mission flourished, with an afternoon children's service for three hundred, open air services on Rye Lane in the summer months, and a missionary band called the 'Abdul Massihans' named after Henry Martyn's Indian convert in Agra where Gaster was first a missionary. The subject of foreign mission was always kept in the mind of the congregation by their indomitable vicar, and the CMS local association was well attended well beyond his tenure.

⁴⁷³ *Brief History*, p. 22, 23.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Clyde Binfield, one of the most significant local church historians, and one of only a few who bring the account into the present draws our attention to the comments of E. A. Payne:

But though life can only be understood backwards, it has to be lived forwards. The constant re-examination of the past, the revision of our verdicts, the setting of our story in a wider perspective is for the purpose of wiser decisions on current issues and the better fulfilment of our continuing tasks. There is a real danger that we may act unwisely because we do not know the past or are stampeded by those whose account of it is superficial or distorted.⁴⁷⁵

And so we have seen from this historical study of Rev. Thomas J. Gaster that he thought his principles were important for future generations. His recording was in itself a theological reflection, a laying down of story as history, even within his own generation, to furnish future members of the congregation with a healthy knowledge of their roots.

⁴⁷⁵ E. A. Payne, 'History: Too Much or Too Little', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. xxii, (8) (October 1968), p. 396; C. Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780-1920* (London, 1977).

Chapter 5

New Parochialism: The Anglican Mission Movement and the Missionary Home Parish

‘It is sometimes asserted that the real Reformation of the Church of England took place, not in the sixteenth century, but in the first half of the nineteenth.’⁵⁸⁶

William Wand, Bishop of London.

After 1851, parochialism moved into new parochialism – a fusion of parochial and mission models was first imagined and then put into practice. This Chapter will give consideration to developments of the English parish from 1851 to 1900 with specific focus on a missionary Anglican expression which re-imagined and reapplied the idea of parish to suit a new context and which demonstrate that Gaster’s initiatives in ministry in Peckham represent part of a wider national shift. The new parochialism also adopted a mentality of leadership, a missionary story, and a methodology, all of which were greatly influenced by the Church Missionary Society, especially as it was experienced in the Indian context. It will also be shown that a renewed vision for the urban parish was already emerging in the early decades of the century, through the pioneering leadership of clergy such as Champneys and Hook. Parochialism will be explored where it pertains to an implicit tension between parish and mission. The parish system reached something of a crisis during the nineteenth century, which caused a re-imagining of parish which will be termed the new parochialism, a dynamic and creative re-engagement and development of the Church of England model. The new parochialism arose primarily from within the Evangelical party and depended upon the networks of individuals within this party. Creative re-imagining and re-engagement was systematic, from 1867 clarifying the financial model by which new parishes were established and maintained, adopting a new missionary

⁵⁸⁶ C. K. Francis Brown, *A History of the English Clergy 1800-1900* (Faith Press: London, 1953), p. ix.

approach to pastoral care and visiting, and instigating new professionalism in leadership.

Thomas Gaster, whose ministry and in India and congregational work in London has served as the primary data for this thesis will be revealed in this chapter as extraordinary but not exceptional. When his methods and motivations are laid alongside the stories of the ministries of others returning from the mission field, and with missionary parochialism in the Church of England, in London and beyond, common threads will be discovered. Though the Bebbington quadrilateral can be a useful descriptive framework for theology, it cannot satisfactorily explain why the new parochialism emerged, and what gave it the vibrancy it plainly possessed.⁵⁸⁷ Two further assessments are needed if mission and congregations are to be understood: those of story and leadership.

The new parochialism existed within a powerful narrative and symbolic universe which was informed by global mission. The Evangelical world lived in the conscious context of a historical meta-narrative of revival and reform, or freedom and constraint, and of the struggle for the gospel. This martial approach, which may have contributed to conflict across party lines, was also drawn from and reinforced by a scriptural and heroic imagination through the drama of battle and spiritual warfare. In terms of leadership, the new parochialism adopted a highly entrepreneurial approach to organisational change. A non-specialisation of ministry was drawn from the pioneering necessities of the mission field, and then deployed to match the demanding activities of home mission. The activism had a focus and a method which was clearly directed and which was rolled out through inspiration, co-operation and a template for ministry which could be emulated and repeated.

This chapter will compare the narrative and historical evidence of Thomas Gaster with brief explorations of other Church of England clergy with similar ministries, during what Bartlett describes from 1881 as the ‘golden age of the parish’.⁵⁸⁸ The new parochialism will be shown to be a knowing engagement with the failing and

⁵⁸⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 2-17.

⁵⁸⁸ Bartlett, *Churches in Bermondsey*, pp. 2, 116-238; J. Wolfe, ‘What can the Twenty-First Century Church Learn from the Victorians?’ (Exeter Cathedral, Hooker Lecture, 2010), p. 2.

flawed realities of the old parochial system, and a creative re-imaging and re-applying of mission principles to the new context of home mission which was determined to be both parochial and missional, but which formed a distinct model which though drawing on both had become an engine for extraordinary growth. This thesis suggests the impetus and foundations for the golden age lie earlier and were specifically inspired by the perspective and practices of the mission field, the CMS and the returning missionaries. This was a view held at the time, as an open letter from South London Incumbents in *The Times* stated explicitly in retrospect in 1899:

Clergy who have laboured in the foreign mission field have borne witness that the so-called 'heathen' of India have more religious feeling in them, and perform the religious duties of prayer and worship more generally than the masses of South London.⁵⁸⁹

English Parochialism Challenged

The ideal of English parochialism was summarised in a contemporary article:

Our land is divided into dioceses, and every diocese into parishes; and while these divisions are recognised by law, and their limits annually defined and continually re traced, so that every man may always be assigned to his own; it is a recognised principle, that the bishop is put in charge of the whole population of his diocese, and that under him the priests have the care of all within their several parishes.⁵⁹⁰

Or so went the theory. The English parish, so pervasive an archetype in the English psyche during the nineteenth century, was nevertheless deeply challenged. It was challenged historically, by various readings of the history of the Church of England, and by its relatively later arrival as a pastoral and institutional model.⁵⁹¹ It was challenged logistically, by cities with burgeoning populations which outstripped its

⁵⁸⁹ *The Times*, 22 May 1899.

⁵⁹⁰ *The Parochial system, and appeal to English Churchmen* (London, 1838), p. 2, 6.

⁵⁹¹ And for earlier assessments of parish: J. H. Overton and F. A. Relton, *History of the English Church: The English church from the accession of George I to the end of the eighteenth century (1714-1800)* (London, 1906); W. R. W. Stephens, *The English Church* (London, 1901).

capacity. It was challenged culturally, through the emergence of vigorous nonconformist and congregational churches. It was challenged as a future model within the established church by diversity and increasing divided party lines in the Church of England; and it was challenged by the British Empire, as the globalising forces subjected the parish system to perspectives and practicalities outside the United Kingdom. And it was deeply challenged by the glaring inconsistencies and contradictions which presented themselves to churchgoing public, and to those in positions of leadership in society and the church.

However simple the concept of parish may have been as an ideal, bewildering complexity was the reality, for it had never truly worked as stated. The national church was littered with chapels, field churches and other organisational anomalies, whose existence and heritage brought challenges to the fundamental ideal from history and the present.⁵⁹² Hammond said of Victorian vicars and the parish: ‘the system within which these clergymen worked was astonishingly disorganised and illogical.’⁵⁹³ These challenges to the parish system only multiplied through the growth of alternative forms of organisation and mission amongst Quaker, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist congregations who found vibrancy outside the parish ideal and became increasingly opposed to it.⁵⁹⁴

The parish ideal was challenged by readings of history. To the Evangelicals, there was precedent to the complementarity of parochial and missional models of church. The idea that the parish system as expressed in its theoretical ideal was that in the English context one could quickly point to the lack of uniformity and the relatively late development of parochialism as a pastoral and missionary system.⁵⁹⁵ The ordering of congregations which became the parish system was arguably progressive but uneven. Pounds suggests that the system of parishes evolved most during Anglo-

⁵⁹² Spencer, *Parochial vision*, p. 20, suggests that there were more British non-parochial than parochial churches even in the middle ages. Also M. Burkill, *The Parish System: The Same Yesterday, Today and Forever* (London, 2005), pp. 19, 22.

⁵⁹³ Hammond, *The Parson and the Victorian Parish* (London, 1977), p. 10.

⁵⁹⁴ C. Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, pp. 133-4, brings attention to the Couzen-Hardys as examples of nonconformist gentry and landowners in Norfolk who were deeply opposed to the order of church and state that met in parish and politics.

⁵⁹⁵ Burkill, *Parish System*, pp. 6-22; G. W. O. Addleshaw, *The Early Parochial System and the Divine Office* (London, 1957), p. 5; A. Jones, *A Thousand Years of the English Parish: Medieval Patterns & Modern Interpretations* (Moreton-in-Marsh, 2000), p. 15.

Saxon localised ministry and then became more of a national phenomenon in the twelfth century.⁵⁹⁶ Despite the pervasive success of this system for the English context it is persuasively argued that it was the financial considerations, with corresponding obligations surrounding tithes, which led to a clear distinguishing of geographical parishes and the clarification of disputed boundaries rather than the missional impetus.⁵⁹⁷ Jones makes a persuasive case for reading the English parish as series of organisational responses to civil and cultural changes which reflect the ‘many stages in the development of English society’.⁵⁹⁸ Whether termed as the interplay between Celtic and Roman models of governance, or as a pendulum between freedom and control, the complexity, the English church in its earlier centuries, was little contested. The parish as it continued into the nineteenth century was perceived as an extension of the Roman model, but there was deep sympathy for the earlier forms of Celtic freedom.

There is evidently a danger in unintended anachronisms, and one should be even more wary of intentional conflation and misrepresentation of terms. Thus, to speak of ‘parochiae’ as spiritual areas of responsibility or ecclesiastical spheres of influence, rather than as strictly delineated and boundaried territories is probably more accurate for the period between the founding of the Minsters and the Norman conquest. For at least six hundred years, Parish and Diocese were often interchangeable terms, and they did not belong solely to highly localised clergy attached to a benefice, and assisted by curates and committed laity. Parochiae were associated with Minsters, chapels, and regional and kingdom-based responsibilities. Parochial diversity was standard and sometimes fluid - Monastic leaders, Rectors and Bishops were all said to have had parishes, often covering extensive geographic areas.⁵⁹⁹ As Burkill suggests:

⁵⁹⁶ N. J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: The Culture of Religion from Augustine to Victoria* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 3. York, Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, 2010 Dr Carol Cragoe, review of *The English Parish Church through the Centuries*, (review no. 1154) [<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1154>]. Accessed 11 August 2013.

⁵⁹⁷ M. Smith (ed.), *Doing the Duty of the Parish: Surveys of the Church in Hampshire 1810* (Winchester, 2004). J. Gregory, review of *Doing the Duty of the Parish: Surveys of the Church in Hampshire 1810* (review no. 508) [<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/508>]; A. J. Schmidt, ‘Review of *A History of the English Parish: The Culture of Religion from Saint Augustine to Queen Victoria*’, *Journal of Social History*, 35 (2) (Winter 2001), pp. 497-498.

⁵⁹⁸ Jones, *A Thousand Years*, p. 24; M. Burkill, *The Parish System*, p.10, 11.

⁵⁹⁹ This is ably explored in Jones, *A Thousand Years*, pp. 5-40.

the minster's field of activity would be called its *parochiae*, the Latin term normally translated as parish. However, at this stage it must be stressed that parochial was a term which was linked to the activity, or reach of Christian ministry, oversight and mission. Although it inevitably had some territorial connotations that came from the travelling distance which was reasonably possible from the minster, it certainly did not have the rigid boundaries that we tend to associate with the word today.⁶⁰⁰

To missionary practitioners and supporters of the nineteenth century, where with agencies and societies like CMS they had become used to working with deployed teams of missionaries, and had become comfortable with a paradigm of developing established bases with networks of interlocking pastoral and evangelistic activities and pastoral responsibilities, the Celtic and minster models provided a firm historical precedent for a pattern of ministry which was already operant.

First, the minster pattern for ministry was thriving within the missionary agencies themselves. A missionary society, such as CMS, with hundreds of missionaries and mission stations, tens of thousands of supporters, and which operated alongside the diocesan system of the nineteenth century Church of England, read into the missionary Celtic minsters a predecessor for their own existence and agency.⁶⁰¹ It worked with the national church in the region of operation, but was not ordered by it, it paid lip service to Diocesan Bishops, but was in no way organisationally accountable to the local or regional or even national Bishops; it had its own financial support base, economic model, selection procedures, authorisation for local and indigenous leaders akin to ordination, a different training culture to the national

⁶⁰⁰ Burkill, *The Parish System*, p. 12, also N. Spencer, *Parochial Vision*, p. xv, for contemporary applications. See also J. M. A. Pitt, 'Wiltshire Minster Parochiae and West Saxon Ecclesiastical Organisation' (PhD Dissertation, University of Southampton, 1999) and J. Blair, 'Review of A. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters*', *English Historical Review*, CXXIII (503) (2008), pp. 1002-1003, and J. Blair, 'From Minster to Parish Church' in J. Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: The Local Church in Transition, 950-1200* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1-19. Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988. Review: *Speculum*, 65, p. 790 (1990).

⁶⁰¹ E. Stock, *History of the CMS*, Vol 1, pp. 10, 11; Wakeman, *Introduction to the History of the Church of England* (London, 1899), p. 22; A. Neander, *A Light in Dark Places* (New York, 1851), p. 248.

church, globally recognised training institutions, its own independent manner to decide the deployment of missionaries and all with a global reach or parish.

This was a strong and controlling paradigm for the missionaries' mentality, and for the missionary chronicler. In the writings of Eugene Stock we notice a preparedness to overlook enormous doctrinal divergences in order to illustrate these historical convergences, for example, esteeming the missionary heroism of Jesuits and the faithful witness of previous generations in India whilst simultaneously pointing out the shortcomings of the British church. Writing about Indian mission history and the early days of Christian witness in India he says:

We must not forget, however, that there were already two large bodies of Indian Christians: (1) the ancient Syrian Church of Malabar, of which we shall hear more by-and-by; (2) the Roman Catholic descendants of the converts made by the labours of the heroic Jesuit, Francis Xavier, and his successors. The fisherman caste of South India, in particular, had been largely influenced by the Roman Missions, the centre of which was at Goa, on the west coast.⁶⁰³

To the nineteenth century evangelical historian, the minsters and the emergence of parishes and the contrast of Roman and Celtic forms of mission set a controlling paradigm – bolstering arguments for both an appreciation of parish or a challenge of narrowly defined parochialism. It was a sacred history of the British past with evident providentialist readings. Eugene Stock, the historian of the Church Missionary Society, was amongst those who looked to the Celtic era as a golden age for British missions in the church. 'There was little of the spirit of the Gospel in the Christendom of the Dark Ages that followed. Except in our own country. While Arians and Pelagians waged war against the truth in East and West, while ecclesiastical pomp and pride were superseding the simplicity and devotion of earlier centuries, while the bishops of Rome were laying the foundations of Papal supremacy, England, Ireland, and Scotland presented scenes and illustrations of true missionary enterprise.'⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ E. Stock, *Beginnings in India (of Anglican Missions)* (London, 1917), p. 3.

⁶⁰⁴ E. Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol. 1, p. 9-12, concurs with August Neander in this depiction and finds positive examples of pre-Roman missionary minsters. 'The British and Irish

Wakeman, though as a middle churchman disagreeing with the remedy of evangelical mission, nevertheless chimes with Stock in this framing of the narrative diagnosis by presenting a contrast between freedom and regularisation. His interpretation traces the progress of the parish system through lurches of institutionalisation, until the submission of chaotic Celtic forms of governance to ordered Roman systemisation, and the eventual Norman conquest triggering increasing contact with church authority beyond the island shores:

It was clear that if the English Church was to be a great national force, it must be united and organised. If it was to be united and organised, if order and government were to rule in the place of isolated effort and unity and personal influence, if bishops were to be governors and administrators as well as leaders, it could only be by obeying knowledge rather than ignorance, by preferring catholic tradition to local custom — in a word, by subordinating Celtic to Roman Christianity.⁶⁰⁵

A strong story contains drama, crisis and characterisation. This Celtic/Roman contrast was easily conflated to become the narrative of a centuries-long story of struggle, incorporating events from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and building on this with tales of the freedom of the Evangelical Revival's stories of opposition to revival from controlling local clergy asserting parochialism as a limiting tool.⁶⁰⁶ Wolffe agrees that this era of rapid expansion involved particularly acute tensions between inherited structures and pressures for innovation and adaptation.⁶⁰⁷ The motif of foreign Romanising structures restricting free Celtic missions and restricting life for indigenous British Christianity was given greater impetus by the Evangelical revivals

missionaries certainly surpassed Boniface in freedom of spirit and purity of Christian knowledge; but Rome, by its superior organization, triumphed in the end, and though it introduced new and unscriptural elements into the Church, it helped at the same time to consolidate its outward framework against the assaults of Paganism.' See also Neander, *Light in Dark Places*, pp. 173-238.

⁶⁰⁵ Wakeman, *Introduction*, pp. 31, expresses his sympathies with Newman and Pusey, p. 466.

⁶⁰⁶ R. Williams, *Why Study the Past: The Quest for the Historical Church* (London, 2014), frames this as the narrative of church versus pseudo-church, pp. 18-21.

⁶⁰⁷ J. Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham, 2006), p. 107.

in which the Wesleys and Whitfield found themselves facing opposition from the beneficiaries of parochial formalism.⁶⁰⁸

The parish model faced challenges from population growth. Earlier realisations of the failure of the parochial model had precipitated only limited parliamentary action, such as the launch of Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund for the construction of new churches in 1704. The Evangelical Revival's local growth had necessitated adaptations of the parochial model, but these were in effect sidestepping parochialism rather than reforming it. New churches affiliated to the Church of England through a permissive merger of episcopal and private authority, such as the Huntingdon connection churches and other proprietary chapels.⁶⁰⁹

The reality that faced the Victorian church was that in many ways the parish model, even as it was vigorously championed in parliament and the church, and remained a powerful symbol of national and ecclesiastical identity was simultaneously being challenged, placed under considerable strain and was under threat for both spiritual and civic reasons. In the 1830's even those who were trying new forms of mission in the parish, or who made a fresh argument for the more missionary reimagining of new parochialism agreed with this fundamental narrative of the strains on the parish system as it stood. Henry Wilberforce made an appeal directly from within the parish model:

We must not introduce new principles, but recur to old ones; to those by which the ancient Church originally leavened the whole mass of national heathenism, and afterwards provided against the gradual increase of a neglected and demoralized population in the very heart of Christendom. These things were effected by means of that system which apportioned every part of the Church to diocesan bishops' and parochial priests, and in its further development accordingly we must seek a remedy for the evils of our own day.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Wakeman, *Introduction*, p. 437. 'The difficulty of adapting novel developments of irregular and imperious spiritual zeal to the rules of an existing Church polity is perhaps the greatest which can tax the powers of an ecclesiastical ruler.'

⁶⁰⁹ N. Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age, 1789-1901* (Carlisle, 2003), p. 375-376. Also M. H. Port, *Six Hundred New Churches*, pp. 11, 111, 116.

⁶¹⁰ H.W. Wilberforce, *The Parochial system, and appeal to English Churchmen* (London, 1838), p. 2, 6.

And the crisis was still keenly felt a generation later as the populations continued to expand. The depth of the failure to respond to the spiritual needs of growing cities was a theme to which many returned from the 1830's and right through the next 50 years. But it was the Church survey of 1851 which profoundly unsettled many who were wedded to the parish ideal and caused a profound reassessment to occur which would lead to a response of effective action.⁶¹¹ The Survey made public two striking findings. The first was that Nonconformity had grown enormously, and in some areas represented the majority of church affiliation and attendance. The second profound realisation was that church attendance of any sort in many areas had slipped below fifty per cent of the population on an average Sunday.⁶¹² In poorer urban areas where population had grown considerably the Church of England had resolutely failed to keep pace with change either in pastoral care or in mission.⁶¹³

J. C. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool at the close of the century articulated the seriousness of the failings of parochialism in its older, ineffective forms. He vigorously embarked on authorisations in his diocese which owed more to the mission field abroad and the city missions than to the precedent of the localised parish ideal.⁶¹⁴ The Bishop of Bedford, Walsham How, as Suffragan Bishop responsible for the East End, was no less strident about the depth of the crisis and laid the blame at the feet of the institution to which he belonged, which had failed to reach swathes of the poorer urban population due to the unbending nature of the parish system itself:

her system has been too stiff and unbending and lacking in power of adaptation, or whether it be that her clergy have been supine, or worldly, or ill-trained for their special work among the godless and

⁶¹¹ Jones, *Thousand Years*, p. 217-237. Bebbington questions whether the crisis was as profound as it was made out to be, but none deny that the crisis was 'felt' especially by the Established church. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 107-112. W. S. F. Pickering, 'The 1851 Religious Census: A Useless Experiment?' *British Journal of Sociology*, 18 (4) (1967), pp. 393; K. S. Inglis, 'Patterns in Religious Worship in 1851', *JEH*, 11, (1) (1960), pp. 80ff.

⁶¹² F. Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2008), p. 3-9.

⁶¹³ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 'All Eight London boroughs and Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford recorded an index of attendance below 49.7%. The cities of Victorian England seemed to be weak spots for the churches. Population growth, industrialization and urbanization had transformed the face of much of the country, and the churches had not adjusted to altered circumstances.' p. 107-108.

⁶¹⁴ J. C. Ryle, 'Can they be brought in?' (Hunt and Co: London, 1883) p. 28. Ryle's relationship with parish systems in explored by Jones and James, 'Ryle for the Third Millennium', *Churchman*, 114 (2), p. 120 [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/churchman/114-02_114.pdf].

ignorant; or whether it be that her laity, for lack of encouragement or for lack of faith, left all to the clergy, and woke up too late to the great work lying before them, the Church has need to humble herself and confess her shortcomings, and pray for power to undo past mistakes and to repair past neglect..⁶¹⁵

Home Mission was the early term used to bring the focus of mission to the sending country rather than to the foreign part. The Church Missionary Society gave rise to her Home Mission equivalent, the Church Pastoral Aid Society which Charles Simeon began to use for the deployment of curates to towns and villages and which would buy up patronage of parishes to ensure continuity along Evangelical and Protestant lines. The several city missions (such as London City Mission, Birmingham City Mission) also employed evangelists as missionaries most of whom worked with specific parishes and churches as evangelists, but both these models could be undertaken without changing the nature of parish.⁶¹⁶

One thing that changed was that from the 1860s a response from the Evangelicals which was neither solely parochial nor solely missional was created. Ryle was able to report that despite the challenges, by the 1880s a change had already occurred which showed signs that the new parochialism was starting to have an effect. After 1851, parochialism moved into new parochialism – a fusion of parochial and mission models was first imagined and then put into practice, and which built on the experimentation visible both by Hanoverian pioneers and foreign missionaries. The Liverpool congregations overseen by Bishop Ryle had grown 800 per cent but despite this his own assessment in 1882 was still sober:⁶¹⁷

The population of the West Derby Hundred has grown with unprecedented rapidity during the last 180 years. Our great seaport on the Mersey has leaped with a few bounds into the foremost position in the Queen's dominions. Both inside and outside of Liverpool there has been a constant influx and immigration of people into the district.

⁶¹⁵ W. W. How, *The Official Report of the Church Congress, Derby 1882* (3, 4, 5, 6 October). Statements made during Public worship, 3 October 1882; see P. Midgely, *The Churches and the Working classes: Leeds 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 126-137, on the interplay of Salvation Army and Anglican parishes in Leeds.

⁶¹⁶ Wolfe, *Expansion*, pp. 161-165.

⁶¹⁷ Jones, *Ryle for the New Millennium*, p. 19.

But all this time, unhappily, the Church of England, until of late years has done comparatively little for the souls who were brought together.⁶¹⁸

The moment of response was theological and social, and it was also the product of the overseas mission methods of India fusing with the new suburban and urban demands of church life. Moreover, the new parochialism was made possible by some fundamental and liberating changes in the national legal framework, and it is to this that we now turn.

Snell's understanding of the parish is of a community reinforced by powerful local xenophobia and the exclusion of interlopers, bolstered by differing benefits for local or incoming poor.⁶¹⁹ Steve Hindle examines the micro-politics of poor relief and the social benefit of charities and associations, and there are many versions of the social history of the parish.⁶²⁰ All of these perspectives must be read together within the construction and flourishing of the new parochialism, and the legal framework which enabled the missionary dynamics and methods to operate within home territories and within the Church of England.

The 1869 developments, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, released a further boom in church building and the formation of new Church of England parishes. Chadwick suggests that between 1840 and 1876 there were 1,727 new

⁶¹⁸ Ryle, *Charges and Addresses* (1978), p. 5; Ryle, *Can they Be Brought in?* (Liverpool, 1883). Ryle calculates attendance at Church of England churches in some poorer areas of Liverpool at only 2.8% on Trinity Sunday 1882. See also A. Wilcox, *The Church and the Slums: The Victorian Anglican Church and its Mission to the Poor* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 65, for the fusion of mission and parish through citywide Moody missions.

⁶¹⁹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*. The parish was 'a proud self-administering neighbourhood of inter-connected interests,' p. 497, 31; A. Kidd, 'Review of Snell (2006)', *Histoire sociale/Social history*, 41, (82) (Novembre-November 2008), pp. 644-646.

⁶²⁰ Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004). Also Paul Griffiths, 'Review of Hindle, S., *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750*' (June 2006). [<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11841>]. Accessed 12 August 2014; A. Jennings, *Old Rectory: the story of the English parsonage* (Continuum, 2009); M. Smith, *Doing the Duty of the Parish: Surveys of the Church in Hampshire 1810*; M. Gregory, review of *Doing the Duty of the Parish: Surveys of the Church in Hampshire 1810* (review no. 508) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/508>]. Accessed 7 May 2011. And Smith response to review: [<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/508/response>]. Accessed 12 August 2013.

churches built in England and Wales.⁶²¹ And crucial in this surge of activity were the Sumner brothers, one Archbishop of Canterbury and the other Bishop of Winchester with oversight of South London.⁶²²

Charles Sumner established a pattern of overseeing the construction of new churches – where his early initiative in Wales later led to 55 new churches and 124 parishes restored.⁶²³ In Winchester Diocese, he quickly worked to establish new districts and parishes, and laboured to generate funds for these new projects himself. The full extent of this unleashing of church enlargement, growth and the foundation of new parishes cannot be overstated. Sumner began raising the priority of new churches, at a meeting in the summer of 1845, to summing up the crisis as he understood it.⁶²⁴ Cox persuasively points out that the codification of religious belief as church attendance, and of church provision through the calculation of physical space in churches was to misunderstand the pattern of religious life and belief amongst the poorer inhabitants of Lambeth.⁶²⁵ Despite this, a Southwark Fund for Schools and Churches was launched by the Bishop at this meeting into which £30,000 was quickly gathered. This fund soon tripled, and at the end of only two years, five new churches had been started with the financing, sixteen schools built or begun, and sites for three other churches bought.

The new parliamentary legislation, the stark information of the 1851 census and the dynamism of the Evangelical and mission-minded Sumner all combined with determined philanthropic financial backing and precipitated a total revolution in Church of England provision for the Capital. From 1829, 176 new churches had been built, and 100 rebuilt with a total expenditure on Anglican churches estimated at

⁶²¹ Chadwick, II, p. 241. Others discuss the impact of these acts - see Burkill, *The Parish System*, p. 33f; Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age*, p. 370-373; Jones, *A Thousand Years of the English Parish*, pp. 264, 267-283 calls this season the 'triumph of the parish.'

⁶²² G. H. Sumner, *Life of Charles, Richard Sumner, Bishop of Winchester* (London, 1876) describes Sumner's interest and support of the Blandford initiatives. George Pitcher, of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners wrote: 'Bishop Sumner had taken a great interest in the business transacted by the late Board, and he continued to render the most invaluable aid in its management by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners from 1856 to 1864, when he declined to be re-elected a member of the Estates Committee, but left his colleagues fully sensible of the services he had, in these matters, rendered to themselves and to the public.' p. 423.

⁶²³ G. H. Sumner, *Life*, pp. 116.

⁶²⁴ Ibid. 'The Bishop laid before the meeting statistics which were appalling. To speak only of Lambeth and Southwark, with a population of upwards of 135,000 souls, accommodation in churches was provided for only one in eight, and educational provision in schools connected with the church, for no more than one in fifty-five of its entire population.' p. 245.

⁶²⁵ Cox, *The English Churches in Secular Society*, pp. 4-10.

£1,704,914; on parsonages, £525,229; on schools, £522,039; totalling of £2,752,182 of funding. Sumner consecrated about three hundred churches (new and rebuilt) and under his episcopate nearly four hundred were enlarged.⁶²⁶

Voluntarism – Re-imagining the finances for the New Parochialism.

The systems of church operations, and the means by which the parish or congregation was run and supported owed much to a converging series of methods, borrowed from variety of sources, especially from the missions movement. Voluntarism was one of these ideologically grounded methods, borrowing much from the climate of the nonconformist churches, who had found a vibrancy and effectiveness in the voluntarism of their financial philosophy. Voluntarism was, more importantly, the primary economic engine of the evangelical missions movement. Sarah Flew points out that very little work has been done to ‘initiate a British historiography on the mutually complex inter-relationship of church and finance’, suggesting that the scale and the religious focus of charitable giving has often been neglected by historians of philanthropy, and that the importance of finance has been neglected by theologians and historians.⁶²⁷ Her research traces the vibrancy of the home mission funds in London Diocese, and especially the voluntary contributions and culture of philanthropy and social investment which underpinned the planting of churches and the establishment of new parishes. Reported income between 1874 and 1914 rose by 700%, with the vast majority represented by five funds specifically designed to stand behind the efforts of individuals in starting new churches, and foreign mission funds grew by £1,000,000 over the same period.⁶²⁸ In London as a whole, Home Mission agencies grew considerably between 1874-1914, however, the majority of these gains were to fund ministries which were primarily spiritual and evangelistic rather than to support ministries which were welfare projects.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶ Sumner, op. cit. p. 426, 427. See also Jeremy Morris, *The Nonconformist Experience in Croydon* (Croydon, 1992) which notes that the earlier nonconformist chapel was voluntarily funded but strategically haphazard and locally driven: ‘It is striking, however, how chaotic and unplanned building often was.’ p. 6.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., p. 430-446.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., p. 434. See also S. Flew, ‘Philanthropy and Secularization: The Funding of Anglican Voluntary Religious Organisations in London, 1860–1914’ (PhD, Open University, 2013) and Flew, ‘Charity in the Nineteenth century: unveiling the anonymous Philanthropist’ (Presentation, Association of Business Historians Conference, Lancashire Business School, June 2013).

⁶²⁹ S. Flew, ‘Money matters: the Neglect of Finance in the Historiography of Modern Christianity’, *Studies in Church History*, 49 (The Church on its Past, 2013), pp. 434-436.

Those conversant with, and trained within, evangelical missions abroad brought this model to the home front. While it is undeniable that certain cultural traits which esteemed entrepreneurialism and self-dependency contributed to this in church life, amongst certain proponents the lack of subsidy from Church or State was deemed to be a theological virtue rather than a purely pragmatic necessity.⁶³⁰

Charles Spurgeon went a step further, asserting that voluntarism is the essence of the gospel and contrasting it with a simple donation born from a willing respectability: ‘God loves his people’s services, because they do them voluntarily. Voluntarism is the essence of the gospel. Willing people are those whom God delights to have as his servants.’⁶³¹ The theological position was also a pragmatic one. It underpinned Spurgeon’s demonstration of the wonder of having built the enormous Metropolitan Tabernacle through generosity and free gifts of congregation members. ‘Beyond question, the building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle by voluntary contributions marked and epic in English Nonconformity. Everyone became convinced it was accomplished by the sovereign grace of God.’⁶³² Within about 7 months the entire cost of the building, £31,132 had been raised.

But voluntarism was also a passionately held ecclesiological and political view as well, leading to vigorous and tetchy debates. Spurgeon was not concerned only with voluntarism as a matter for internal church policy and soon contributed to national discussions on the voluntary support of schools and of the Irish clergy. He challenged fellow Nonconformists on education, that they ought to have backed the fundamental principle: ‘If the Nonconformists of England had been logical, they would, instead of allowing the Government to touch it, have been more liberal themselves in its support. It was a gross falsehood to say that Voluntarism had failed.’⁶³³ Spurgeon spoke boldly, believing in the might of the voluntary system and principle that ‘they little

⁶³⁰ M. Nicholls, ‘Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Educationalist’ (Lecture, September 1984). *Baptist Quarterly* (1985), pp. 384-401. ‘Baptists historically adhered to the voluntary principle: believers in their various congregations were separated from and unsupported by the State. The Particular Baptist Confession of 1044(5) and the General Baptist Confession of 1651(6) both emphasised the voluntary support of the ministry.’ p. 385.

⁶³¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *A Sermon on Psalm 110 v3*, delivered on Sabbath Morning, 13 April 1856 at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark [<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0074.htm>]. Accessed 1 January 2013.

⁶³² Lewis A. Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Kregel Publications; 3rd edition 1992), pp. 347, 348.

⁶³³ C. H. Spurgeon, cited in *The Inquirer*, 18 June 1870.

know how grandly the giant of voluntarism will draw the chariot when the pitiful State dwarf is dismissed.’ The example of faith-based and free financing, though exciting to some, so incited the Bishop of Oxford that he responded in print to the intervention of Spurgeon on the Church of Ireland debate.⁶³⁴

Regardless of whether this principle was adopted by Nonconformist congregations, or whether there was resistance to it by certain members of the Established church, for the cause of missions, it was the majority view, and certainly became even more so with the rise of faith missions.⁶³⁵ The earlier birth of CMS and LMS owed much to a sense of exasperation with the processes of the established church, coupled with a theological impetus and urgency of mission and joined to the empowerment of a motivated laity. While this frustration was evidently true for the pioneers of the missions movement and those franchised leaders of the Clapham Sect, by the 1860’s and 1870’s this principle of voluntarism was seen to empower and equip, to be a symbol of freedom from control and interference by higher echelons. There was a class reality which worked in tandem with ecclesiological principles and theological motivations. The Victorian middle-classes would not, under any circumstances, wait for either government or episcopacy, but would look to providence and the voluntary contributions of enthusiasts and supporters to initiate and support a work. And in Spurgeon, they had a symbolic and vocal champion. His supporters made much of his rural roots as a country boy and autodidact who rose from humble origins to become a globally recognised preacher, leader and revivalist, addressing the largest congregation in Britain, and whose sermons were sent round the world within a matter of hours, and were published in Chicago and New York each week.⁶³⁶

Voluntarism was also a motivating force in Peckham. Within the middle class streets of Peckham and Camberwell, church attendance amongst those motivated by the voluntary system in Nonconformist congregations was well over half, with larger and better supported congregations, and a deeper-rooted evangelicalism than in the

⁶³⁴ ‘The Giant of Voluntaryism, or Mr. Spurgeon in the House of Lords: Being an Extract from a Speech by the Lord Bishop of Oxford on the Irish Question ... with Some Comments Thereon, and Mr. Spurgeon’s Reply’ (London, 1868).

⁶³⁵ McIlhiney, *Gentleman in Every Slum*, pp. 9-17, 77-89, 92-96, 109-11.

⁶³⁶ H. Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon* (Edinburgh, 1978), pp. 1-45, who argued that Spurgeon was a typical Victorian auto-didact who read voraciously and more widely than a person formally trained would typically do. And Jeffrey Greenman, Timothy Larsen and Stephen R. Spence (eds.), *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, 2007), p. 198.

majority of Established congregations.⁶³⁷ The Huntingdon Connection churches and proprietary chapels also had a century of precedent of merging the self-supporting polity with the liturgy and doctrine of the Church of England. This meant that Gaster's All Saints was financed and operated according to the normal principles of his context and contemporaries in Peckham and Camberwell, and in keeping with the missionary methodology of CMS. Personally his ministry was also the fruit of voluntarism, philanthropy and patronage rather than parochial tithes, as he was a CMS-trained missionary who started his ordained ministry paid through the donations of supporters in Poplar. The critique of the voluntary method was that it meant that clergy and missionaries could often be impoverished and unable to support their families, and instance this is borne out in the particular case of Thomas Gaster, who, whilst in India couldn't pay family dental bills and picked up unserviceable debts.⁶³⁸

However, a moderated form of voluntarism, which further demonstrates that new parochialism was a fusion of two models, is seen in the relationship between the new churches in the Church of England and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. On the establishment of a new parish, the founding group needed to make over a grant of £1000 to the Commissioners, which then would be paid as a stipend to the minister in charge, and his successors. This created a system which was both voluntary and regulated, free and ordered, with money raised through subscription but administered through the structures of parochialism, and therefore could also be a beneficiary of it.⁶³⁹ Gaster wrote to the Commissioners asking for an augmentation of the grant from the voluntary fund with a contribution from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.⁶⁴⁰ And a few weeks later, this request was granted and a small addition to the stipend

⁶³⁷ To compare with nonconformity see also Morris, *The Nonconformist Experience in Croydon*, p. 4 for comparison to Peckham, and Binfield, *So Down to Prayer*, pp. 164-167 for suburban nonconformity in Cambridge and Manchester. J. D. Beasley, *Peckham and Nunhead Churches*, p. 82-86 demonstrates that this bias to churches financed under the voluntary system still reigned in the area at the turn of the century.

⁶³⁸ See letter from Gaster to the CMS Committee 22 November 1858 and letter, 15 March 1860.

⁶³⁹ Letter from G Pitcher of Ecclesiastical Commissioners to T. Gaster, 21 March 1878, confirming a stipend of £33, 6, 8. from the £1000 of endowment paid from 4 July 1872 (CERC).

⁶⁴⁰ Thomas Gaster to George Pitcher 29 May 1874 (All Saints Records), Title 35,240. The Church of All Saints Blenheim Grove Camberwell was consecrated in July 1872 and a particular district assigned by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The Stipend if the incumbent is derived from an annual payment of £33.6.8 in respect of £1000 paid over to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners 'in aid of the endowment of the cure' commencing as from 4 July 1872, - and from Seat rents. Will you kindly inform me whether the Ecclesiastical Commissioners will give further aid to the endowment of the cure, and if so on what conditions? The population of the district at the last census was 4,891.'

was made. By 1901, Percy Gaster was handling all correspondence for his father, and the small augmentation amounted to £7.18 per annum until 1st November 1906.⁶⁴¹

Thus we can clearly see that the new Parochialism was generated by a missionary approach to funding and the voluntary principle, but merged this with the previous parochial system to create a dynamic, new initiative for home mission through the parish.

In the development of parochialism into new parochialism, the parish was re-imagined professionally and vocationally. These clergy were focussed and dedicated, but in the pioneering phase of starting new churches could not afford to be the pastoral, liturgical or theological specialists they might have wanted to be. Though Heeney argues that the increasing professionalization of other trained intellectual disciplines forced the clergy into newly-defined sacred roles, the move to professionalization was incomplete, with no clear system available to clergy of reward for work undertaken and completed, and no system of advancement or preferment beyond a ragbag of patronage and feudal politics.⁶⁴⁴ ‘The Victorian clergyman was expected to be a generalist, to perform services which required trained intelligence and general knowledge rather than specific skills, to fill the gaps in local public service not yet occupied by either professional men or government bureaucrats.’⁶⁴⁵

This new professionalism was not the preserve of the Evangelical, but the zeal and activism of service beyond the confines of the church building was perhaps was stronger amongst those trained in the mission mandate and method. The Tractarians began new daily services, but the Evangelicals restored outdoor preaching and informal and cottage services, and there was an acceptance of the necessity of methodical visiting and of a good Christian character across both traditions.⁶⁴⁶ Once the pioneering phase of new parochialism had ended, the process of consolidation and

⁶⁴¹ P. Gaster in correspondence with Ecclesiastical Commissioners, 5 April 1892; 6 May 1901; 1 August 1901; 1 November 1906.

⁶⁴⁴ B. Heeney, *A Different kind of Gentleman* (Hamden, 1976). ‘The ideal parson of the Victorian pastoral theologians was a hard worker, industrious, punctual, systematic and thorough.’ pp. 1-6, 18, 32.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶⁴⁶ H. W. Wilberforce, *The parochial system: an appeal to English churchmen* (London, 1838), pp. 8, 10, 138, 139.

growth began which was a period in church life which required a transition in skills. The urban incumbent often became an administrator of church, ministry and parish life. The Guardian newspaper called him the 'nucleus of an organisation of schoolmasters, teachers and district visitors. Around him the voluntary energies of the citizens may be gathered and organised for purposes of good.'⁶⁴⁷

Having argued for the particularities of an individual case in testing a wider thesis as to the nature of Evangelical parish ministry in T. J. Gaster, a number of features have been established. He had been shaped by an essentially missionary outlook on life, theology and ministry, markedly in the training he received and his service with CMS in India. It has been shown that the interplay of two spheres of ministry in foreign and home ministry enliven both the vibrant parish ministry and in turn, also support further foreign missionary endeavours. Gaster continued throughout his Peckham ministry to 'keep the mission in India' in the mind of the English congregation.

The Evangelical Anglican could, furthermore, demonstrate the same voluntarism as the Nonconformist. Specific vehicles and methods drawn from the disciplines of business and charities in the shape of incorporated and voluntary societies greatly affected, even forged the ecclesiology and polity of the new local, urban setting. Whilst the field of ministry took place within a network of Church of England relationships there are a great many other similarities in theology and pragmatics held in common by evangelical clergy within the Church of England and those who ministered in outside it.

The local associations and voluntary societies established in the local parish setting demonstrate the widely held concerns of the congregation as a whole, not solely the vicar or the elected or appointed leaders, and thereby give a healthy indication of the priorities of the believing, attending community that goes beyond the formal statements of doctrine or theology one might gain from analysis of the articulated position only, largely channelled through the leadership exercised from the pulpit or

⁶⁴⁷ *Guardian*, 17 December 1856; Also Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman*, pp. 66-92; Christopher Kent, *Victorian Studies*, 21 (3) (Spring 1978), p. 419, reviews the book by Brian Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England*.

study.⁶⁴⁸ In Peckham, funds were raised for Sunday School, parish poor, Church Association and CMS as well as for the maintenance of the church buildings and the provision of ordained ministry.

The new parochialism cannot be understood without these local societies; whose brief went beyond the strict delineations of parish boundaries. The Church Association was the vehicle of local engagement with national debates and controversies, even as the CMS raised global considerations. The parish itself was founded as a local voluntary society and carved out of the geographic entity of the unwieldy old urban parishes who could no longer function effectively for their engorged populations. Intrinsic in the corporate life of the congregation from its inception were lay involvement around issues of perceived pertinence and personal motivation, and incorporating well-defined goals which were articulated and reported upon, regularly, publicly and concisely. This organisational precision, directed through a day-to-day executive of treasurer and secretary, was given wider significance through the system of patronage and subscription, and lessened conflict which often arose within congregations over the use and intention of corporately held and administered funds. In Peckham, the local church embodied and energised multiple societies and funds, each with their own annual statements and reports, mostly administered through an empowered lay leadership. The All Saints Assistant Clergy fund was still operational a century later.

But there was also a re-imagining of ecclesiology that occurred as parochialism gave way to the new parochialism. The Church Association articulated the polemic edge of Protestant theological passions and focussed energies on a common ecclesiological foe. The local associations and meetings of the Church Association gave local congregation members the opportunity to contribute to national debates, and to engage with a wider national public, and this partisan approach was another death blow to the old parochialism and a movement away from pietistic introversion and hyper-local introspection. Ordinary Evangelicals could feel 'part' of the theological battle over the contested space of national ecclesiology, even if there was harmony in

⁶⁴⁸ Flew shows that the early lead in giving from the clergy gave way to stronger lay participation in the Bishop of London's fund – reducing from 18% to 4% of the total fund. Sarah Flew, 'The Conversion of the Pocket: the funding of Anglican home missionary organisations, 1860-1914' (Lecture at Economic History Society Annual Conference, University of York, 5 April 2013); Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London, 1976), p. 81.

the life of the local congregation, or parish. The desire to engage in this debate, with regular meetings, collections and campaigns, is in itself a refusal to accept a mere parochialism or even a purely congregational concept of the church.

Becker's congregational theories posit that the leader model of congregational life and leadership often externalises conflict, and engages in local politics and larger disputes and that this often binds a community together.⁶⁴⁹ It may be surmised that the externalising of theological conflict onto the national stage through the Church Association, enabled peace to flourish locally, and by legitimising controversy and dissent on national ecclesial polity, internal congregational wranglings were kept to a minimum. In Peckham the clear love and affection for their founding father, T. J. Gaster was increased by their perception of him as a champion in a wider fight, and they seemed to be energised by appropriate conflict – expressed in the Church Association. And thus, though the rhetoric of the Church Association can appear sectarian, locally the opposite is in fact the case, for involvement in the Association at a local level reinforced a wider trans-congregational ecclesiology. The theological controversies represented a battle for the heart and soul of the Church of England, and by way of contradistinction sought to secure and re-establish the Reformed Low Church, anti-papist, anti-ritualist identity of the national church in the face of ascendant Puseyism. Gaster's lectures in Peckham enjoyed high interest and warm uncritical comment in the local Press, and reinforced Evangelical self-understanding and identity, from amongst members of the Established Church and Nonconformists alike. One might observe that the de-personalising of these theological differences to a national and theoretical stage caused local relationships to be warmer.

Heeney reflects that despite the evident ecclesiastical party warfare, the pastoral manuals of differing kinds of churchmanship suggested that pastoral care and visiting were still considered primary concerns, the 'central activity of the Victorian church', and were felt to be so by many parishioners: 'ordinary Englishmen in ordinary parishes received pastoral care which was little touched by the disputes of churchmanship...'⁶⁵⁰ Hammond concurs that the pastoral care of parishioners, and the discipline of regular visitation made up a considerable portion of the experience of

⁶⁴⁹ Becker, *Congregations*, pp. 146-148.

⁶⁵⁰ Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman*, p. 117. For example, Champneys discusses the wider practice of pastoral visitation; W. Champneys, *Parish Work* (London, 1866), pp. 19-24, 28.

local Christianity, being a practice that was carried out more diligently than in the previous century, especially with the trend towards resident clergy.⁶⁵¹ The resurgent enthusiasm for local ministry within the Church of England was a rising tide which carried most theological boats.

Bebbington's quadrilateral does not deny the prevalence of one or more of the indicators, such as activism, but asserts that evangelicalism displayed the combination. Gaster is shown to articulate the crucicentricism, activism, conversionism and biblicism identified by Bebbington as distinctors of Evangelical Christianity. Strenuous visiting, extensive preaching and entrepreneurialism marked the activism; soteriological particularity through Christ marked the crucicentrism, The emphasis on mission both at home and abroad, through books, sending of missionaries and missionary support and information are outworkings of conversionism. The self-declared biblicism in intent is unmistakeable, though it is harder to establish in exposition.

However, it has been shown that Evangelical congregational identity is also marked by a distinctive approach to leadership and history. A battling style of leadership was encouraged, called for and loved, and in the case of Gaster, nurtured by the entrepreneurialism needed by pioneer missionaries and the energetic delegated leadership style of CMS. Pragmatic innovation was encouraged whilst at the same time eschewing doctrinal innovation. The rejection of what was considered new in theology was tied to the understanding of history and heritage without which Evangelicalism couldn't have retained its conviction. The European Reformation was ever in view, despite the passing of the centuries; the historic conflicts with Rome so prevalent in the writings of Luther, Calvin and the later Puritans were so presently inhabited as to inform almost all tests for orthodoxy in the late nineteenth century amongst Evangelicals.

Leadership in the New parochialism

If it can be shown that Gaster's distinctive style of leadership, his theological motivations, his missionary pragmatism and entrepreneurial capabilities, as well as his reading of history, were not out of place amongst Evangelical Anglican parish

⁶⁵¹ Hammond, *Parson*, p. 132.

clergy, this would suggest that we are dealing less with a singular exception, and more with an exemplar of the 'new parochialism'. Gaster is less of a lone controversial figure, and more a member of a movement, whose views and methods resonated with a far wider constituency. A movement of new Evangelical Anglican missionary localism would suggest Gaster was extraordinary without being exceptional.

It has been argued that the specific ministry of Thomas Gaster was an example of a type of re-invigorated missionary parochialism, and that this missionary parochialism was grounded in a cross-fertilisation of missionary and pre-existing parochial models. There were, of course several forebears to a missionary approach to the parish whose activism and method may have created an alternative and dominant paradigm generated without overseas missionary practise.

The renewal of the parish concept had already begun, with the importance of home mission ably spoken of, even at the Congress of the Church. One of those with a pre-existing model who influenced a new paradigm would be William Champneys. Champneys' influential handbooks for parish ministry, *Parish Work*, and a sister volume, *The Spirit in the Word*, an autobiography on 30 years of ministry, form something of a dual purpose.⁶⁵² On the one hand *Parish Work* purports to be a brief manual, a handbook for young clergy and ordinands, but on the other hand it does contain a strong new template and pattern for a reimagined parish system.⁶⁵³ His practical writings also pointed out the need for social and societal transformation, especially in the areas of sanitation and poverty relief, causing Champney's ministry to be described by George Kitson Clark as one of the great slum pastorates of Evangelical Anglicans.⁶⁵⁴ He was curate for six years at St Ebbe's church in Oxford, and then from 1837 was vicar of the neglected parish and church of St Mary's in Whitechapel,⁶⁵⁵ providing the 'model of a working clergyman'

⁶⁵² Champneys, *Parish Work*; W. Champneys, *The Spirit in the Word* (London, 1862).

⁶⁵³ 'Some considerable part of the real good which has been done in England is due to those who have conscientiously, truthfully, and perseveringly endeavoured to carry out 'the parochial system'; who have received their own allotment as a sacred trust; worked it with persevering diligence; and, as far as might be, kept to it as their divinely-appointed sphere of labour.' *Parish Work*, p. 5.

⁶⁵⁴ G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (Abingdon, 1962), p. 186-188.

⁶⁵⁵ D. B. McIlhiney, *A Gentleman in Every Slum: Church of England Missions in East London, 1837-1914* (Pickwick, 1988), pp. 73-103.

through his oversight of Whitechapel and in his later years the Parish of St Pancras in London.⁶⁵⁶ Previous to his appointment in East London, the parish had been served by a string of non-resident clergy and had seldom seen times of spiritual vibrancy or financial health, even though it was one of the oldest parishes in the area. Within a few years of arriving, he founded parish schools and a plethora of social transformation projects and societies, including a ragged school, a savings society, refuges for abandoned boys and fallen women, and services for the young.⁶⁵⁷ He was vigorously engaged in ministry amongst children and young people, and published profusely. His pithy writing style and frequent anecdotes made his pamphlets, short books for children and theological short works for adults very popular. By the time of the 1851 survey St Mary's was able to record 1547 people in the morning service, 827 in the afternoon and a further 1643 in the evening. Even with the assumption that several people went to church twice on a given Sunday this was a sizeable congregation drawn largely from the local East End population.⁶⁵⁸

For Champneys, allotments provided the best metaphor for the role and purpose of the parish:

The parochial system of the Church of England is a great allotment system. The whole country is divided into parts, and each of those parts is committed to its own particular labourer. The law of the land gives to the clergyman of the parish a certain defined territorial plot, with the souls that live there. He is to dig and work that plot. It is his own.

This stark territorialism was intended to maintain salvation as the top priority: 'He feels himself bound to do all that lies within him to bring every man, and woman and child within his own allotment to Christ, that 'they may be saved through Him forever'.⁶⁵⁹ And with this in mind he unpacked various duties, skills and responsibilities which he suggested be learned and carried out by younger clergy, such as reading the service, visiting the sick, speaking in schools, preaching,

⁶⁵⁶ C. Bullock, 'Biographical Sketch' in W. Champneys, *The Story of the Tentmaker* (London, 1875), pp. 3-1.

⁶⁵⁷ M. Hennel, *Sons of the Prophets: Evangelical Leaders in the Victorian Church* (London, 1979), p. 29, shows the similarities in the ministry of Peirs Bickersteth in Lancashire (1824-1830).

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., on the similarities in the ministry of Henry Venn in Hull from 1827, p. 71, and J. O'Donnel, *John Venn and the friends of the Hereford Poor* (Logaston, 2017).

⁶⁵⁹ W. Champneys, *Parish Work*, pp. 3-5

preparing catechism and bible classes, signing papers, giving lectures and hosting missionary meetings.

His perspective of missions, though stirring, was motivated through theological convictions, and inspired through the apostolic example. Missions affected the parish not as a dominant and locally operant model and motivation for the parish but as an effective and useful organ of parish life. Mission work was primarily envisaged as overseas, and to Champneys, CMS missionary meetings were to be held for children to give them a global perspective and an ability to care for those poorer than themselves.⁶⁶⁰ Missions had become part of local mentality through the extension of the British Empire, “because the providence of God has so extended our Empire that we come into contact with and influence a vast number of nations of the earth.”⁶⁶¹

This being said, there were several duties in the parish, included a civic responsibility for sanitation, education and poverty relief alongside diligent and organised parochial visiting which might now be assessed as missionary in nature. The parish, broken into distinct hyper-local districts was to be attended by district visitors, including the use and deployment of mission-women and bible-women.⁶⁶² But unlike many other ministers working in deprived urban contexts, and the future incarnational model, Champneys did not actually live in the parish and seldom directly ministered there, and for many years directed the activities of Whitechapel through pairs of curates and other appointed ministers whilst giving his time as the Area Dean of Stepney.

Though in later years the call to home mission became a motivation for over a thousand clergy to spend time in ministry even in the East End of London, during the pioneering work of Champneys the call was rather to dedicated and effective pastoral parochialism.⁶⁶³ McIlhenny⁶⁶⁴ does much to bring to historians’ attention the constant

⁶⁶⁰ W. Champneys, *Parish Work*, pp. 109-125; W. Champneys, *The Spirit in the Word*, p. 175.

⁶⁶¹ W. Champneys, *Parish Work*, p.113.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶⁶³ ‘Between 1837 and 1914 perhaps one thousand clergymen spent considerable portions of their ministries in the East End. Among these undoubtedly were a host of unremembered saints, perhaps as well a few geniuses of parochial organization whose methods were never noticed.’ D. B. McIlhenny, *A Gentleman in Every Slum: The Church of England Missions in East London, 1837-1914* (Pickwick, 1988), p. 97.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74-78.

theme of evangelism and home mission for the established church⁶⁶⁵ and rightly stresses that this was, by the closing years of the century increasingly the norm of hard working and dedicated urban parochialism even in parishes of little fame or notoriety.⁶⁶⁶ It was in Watts Ditchfield of Bethnal Green, who began his East End ministry in 1896, a full sixty years after the ministry of Champneys, that the fully missionary approach to the parish fused.⁶⁶⁷ But there were signs of a systematic approach to spiritual and societal regeneration and renewal in the forerunner Champneys.

That there were competing visions of parochialism can we well displayed with a short examination of Leeds.⁶⁶⁸ W.F. Hook, the erstwhile and pragmatic Rector of Leeds, oversaw the creation of multiple parishes in the burgeoning urban context of Leeds, after successful ministry in Coventry, and then later as Dean of Chichester. Theologically he spoke of trying to steer a course between the Scylla of Romanism and the Charybdis of ultra-Protestantism.⁶⁶⁹ Though often facing opposition from Evangelicals for his love of patristics and fondness for High Church theology, he was nevertheless disturbed by the later developments of the Oxford Movement devotees in Leeds, despite having written to Pusey in the first place in 1839 to invite him to start a new High Church congregation in Leeds.⁶⁷⁰ His personal friendship and support for Pusey eventually led to the establishment of St Saviour's under Pusey's patronage, but it was in many ways not a success, especially when contrasted to the vigorous missionary example of the evangelical churches which were carved out of the parish at a similar time. It may have been the confident expansion of definite evangelicalism which inspired Hook to balance out the theology of the town. For example, William Sinclair began as curate of St George's Leeds when it was founded as a district chapel in 1836, achieving parish status after the legislative changes in 1868, and was quickly

⁶⁶⁵ 'The greatest problem before our Church today is how to evangelize the crowded centres of population.' Anon., 'Home Mission-Work in Large Towns', *Church Quarterly Review*, XXII (1886), p. 287.

⁶⁶⁶ 'A Riverside Parish,' in Robert A. Woods (ed.), *The Poor in Great Cities: Their Problems and What is Being Done to Solve Them* (London, 1896), pp. 240-274.

⁶⁶⁷ McIlhiney, *A Gentleman in Every Slum*, p. 77-93.

⁶⁶⁸ H. W. Dalton, *Anglican Resurgence under W.F. Hook in Early Victorian Leeds: Church Life in a Nonconformist Town, 1836-1851* (Thoresby Society, 2002).

⁶⁶⁹ W. F. Hook, *The Duty of English Churchmen and the Progress of the Church in Leeds* (London, 1851), p. 9. See also his proud declaration as Anglicanism as the via media between Rome and Geneva, p. 11.

⁶⁷⁰ N. Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Parish Life: St Saviour's Leeds, 1839-1929*, Borthwick papers, (48) (York, 1975). St Saviours was the "pioneer Tractarian parish in the north of England," p. 27.

established as a base for evangelical spirituality and mission, planting St Andrews church in 1842, St Philips in 1847, which within only fifteen years had a combined Sunday attendance of 2555. Nevertheless, the parish church run by Hook was extremely popular, recording church attendance of 4950 on the same day, whereas by contrast the Pusey outpost of St Saviours had approximately 390 spread over three services.⁶⁷¹ In his anniversary sermon he traced the progress of the parish, recorded the spending of £28,000 in rebuilding the parish church, and over the same period erected a further ten new churches. In the same season of activity, the large parish was subdivided into seventeen parishes, with seventeen parsonages built, and the number of clergy rose from twenty five to sixty, with school provision established for 7,500 children.⁶⁷²

At St Aidans Birkenhead (1846-1868), Joseph Baylee became committed to training a generation for the new parochial context by combining academic training for parochial assistants with systematic training in district visiting and pastoral skills. All students in his college had to do three hours of parish placements three times a week under the supervision of a local incumbent, and after being assigned certain streets, were expected to fill in a return each week stating what they had achieved and who they had visited.⁶⁷³

William Cadman, who went to St George's Southwark in 1853, was confronted by an enormous job, namely a parish of over 35,000 and fewer than 20 regular attenders. He divided the parish into six districts and then appointed scripture readers and a schoolmaster to work in each area, and then found a school house and mission hall to serve each area alongside open-air services and house to house visiting, even of brothels and thieves' dens.⁶⁷⁴ And in this first wave of evangelical parochial ministry can be added Edward Bickersteth, an early CMS missionary, who returned from Sierra Leone to work with CMS and closed out his days as Rector of Watton.

⁶⁷¹ D. Fraser, *A History of Modern Leeds* (Leeds, 1980), pp. 214, 332, in W. Sinclair and J. Wolffe (eds.), *Yorkshire Returns on the 1851 census of Religious Worship. West Riding*. (York, 2000).

⁶⁷² W. F. Hook, *The Duty of English Churchmen*, pp. 19-23; G. Paz, 'Nineteenth Century English Religious Traditions', *Contributions to the Study of Religions*, 44 (Connecticut, 1995), p. 21; J. R. Tate, 'The life of Dr W. F. Hook with special reference to and assessment of his educational work' (Durham Theses, Durham University, 1971); W. R. W. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Walter Farquhar Hook* (Two vols. London, 1879).

⁶⁷³ Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman*, pp. 105-108.

⁶⁷⁴ G. R. Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (London, 1908), p. 189.

Then also the ministries of Francis Close, Hugh McNeile and Hugh Stowell of Salford, all of whom fused a passion for mission with a commitment to evangelical doctrine and home mission.⁶⁷⁶ McNeile was a firebrand preacher, much admired by Eugene Stock,⁶⁷⁷ ran a flourishing parish and was deeply involved in the local politics of Liverpool from 1834-1868.⁶⁷⁸ Stowell's preaching in Manchester, his visitation and commitment to the poorer communities of his district, grew the number of communicants nearly tenfold, giving rise to growing congregations and enormous Sunday Schools.⁶⁷⁹ Also of influence was John Cale Miller, a committed member of the Church Missionary Society community, acting as assistant Secretary whilst serving as a minister of Park Chapel, in Chelsea before taking on an influential incumbency as Rector of St Martin's Birmingham. He was determined to make an impact with others in social transformation, vigorous in the support of public libraries and local hospitals, and active within the parish.⁶⁸⁰ In the late 1840's he held about 2000 baptisms each year and it too became something of a model parish with day schools, night schools, Sunday Schools, ragged schools, adult schools, reading rooms libraries and working men's associations.⁶⁸¹ He multiplied services, preached regularly in the open air, and started afternoon and evening services. This activism went hand in hand with membership of the Church Association, and his reputation as a powerful orator led to many preaching invitations around the country, such as the annual sermons for CPAS (1855) and CMS (1858), and in Oxford, either as the guest of his friend Alfred Christopher at St Aldate's or as the university preacher in 1869.⁶⁸²

Another example of the evangelical reinventors of the parish was Francis Close of Cheltenham, later Dean of Carlisle, who was deeply influenced by Charles Simeon during his undergraduate days at Cambridge. He led Cheltenham Parish structurally much like Hook was doing in Leeds, planting new congregations and erecting new buildings, but not yet easily able to establish new parishes until the legal reforms of

⁶⁷⁶ K. Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England* (Edinburgh, 1988).

⁶⁷⁷ E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society Volume 1* (London, 1899), p. 374.

⁶⁷⁸ Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party*, p. 202.

⁶⁷⁹ J. Wolfe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain: 1829-1860* (Oxford, 1991); C. Bullock, *Hugh Stowell: A Life and its Lessons* (London, 1881).

⁶⁸⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 April 1866.

⁶⁸¹ A. Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (London, 1984).

⁶⁸² J. C. Miller, *Sermons* (London, 1838); D. E. H. Mole, 'John Cale Miller: a Victorian Rector of Birmingham', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 17 (1966), pp. 95-144; A. F. Munden, 'Miller, John Cale (1814-1890)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

the New Parish Acts. Thus, under his leadership, the town became a leading Evangelical centre, building four new churches, each with their own school, and starting educational establishments including a teacher training college for the Church of England. He was a powerful and persuasive preacher, and vocal supporter of mission both at home and abroad, and a convinced member of the Church Association.⁶⁸³ In Carlisle he opened mission rooms, a wooden church, and three further churches in the city and was a regular preacher and instigator of new mission initiatives in the city.⁶⁸⁴

The cause of home mission was vigorously championed from the second half of the century, and the pioneers of the Evangelical parish, began to be infused with the next wave of missionary parochialism which was specifically drawing on foreign mission expertise.⁶⁸⁵ Anderson, one time missionary Bishop of Rupert's Land, and the preacher at Gaster's Commissioning service, returned to Bristol and served as a parish clergyman whilst continuing to espouse the cause of mission home and abroad from within a new parochial setting, and instigating several changes. Another returning missionary from India who became a proponent of the new parochialism upon entering parish ministry in England was Rev John Barton.⁶⁸⁶ Born in 1836, he was an early supporter of CMS, having even given his childhood pocket-money to the mission agency. He attended Cambridge as an undergraduate student, and became friendly with Frederick Gell, later the Bishop of Madras, who was at that time Professor of Hebrew at Christ College, Cambridge.⁶⁸⁷ During the Easter holidays of 1856, John became part of a renewal movement centred around Osmaston Manor, and on returning helped establish the first CMS group amongst students, and became secretary of the new group in 1858. After a brief marriage, which ended in the tragic death of his first wife, he responded to the call and joined CMS himself, was ordained and commissioned on 28th September 1860 with fifteen others.

⁶⁸³ A. F. Munden, 'The Anglican Evangelical party in the Diocese of Carlisle in the nineteenth century, with particular reference to the ministries of Bishop Samuel Waldegrave and Dean Francis Close' (DPhil Durham University, 1987), pp. 208-214.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 220-238; M. Hennel, *Sons of the Prophets: Evangelical Leaders in the Victorian Church* (London, 1979) draws attention to other forerunners such as Edward Bickersteth in Lancashire from 1824-1830, Henry Venn in Hull from 1827, alongside his portrait of Francis Close in Cheltenham. pp. 29, 71, 104-121.

⁶⁸⁵ Rev. Canon McNeile and Rev Joseph Bardsley, 'Home Missions and Lay Agency', *Report of the Proceedings of Church Congress, Bristol, October 11,12,13,14, 1864* (Bristol, 1865), pp. 31-39.

⁶⁸⁶ Porter, *Religion and Empire*, p. 248; Williams, *Self-Governing Church*, pp. 120-150.

⁶⁸⁷ John Barton, *Memoirs*, (1889); C. E. Barton, *John Barton. A Memoir. With a preface by the Lord Bishop of Durham* (London, 1910).

He mentions in his memoirs how this coincided with a time of spiritual awakening and revival which had begun in Ireland the previous summer and continued to stir the students through the year.⁶⁸⁸ On arriving in Agra, he was immediately appointed as joint secretary to the Calcutta Committee, and quickly took up responsibilities at the prestigious St John's College, whilst Shackell was in England. Upon returning, Shackell declared he would rather work at preaching amongst the Hill Tribes and so Barton was left as principal of St John's for over two years until April 1863.⁶⁸⁹ Together with his second wife, Emily, he spent time in Calcutta, still joint secretary of the CMS, and started the Cathedral Mission College for Hindu young men, and then travelled upon occasion to Simla for the hot summer months, and then into the Nilghiri Hills for five months from May 1868, as his health was not able to cope, and then sailed back to London a final time for a while in 1876. During the time of ministry in India, John and Emily had travelled extensively, Barton had mostly been involved in the day to day running of CMS, higher education for men, preaching and bible study, whilst Emily was fully committed to work amongst women, young girls and orphans, as well as caring for their eight children.⁶⁹⁰

Barton was appointed to Holy Trinity Cambridge in October 1877, and remained there for nearly 17 years. The large vicarage was designed to accommodate a large family and to host eighty undergraduates. The parish had a population of about 2000, and there were about 200 university student members of the congregation.⁶⁹¹ Barton was an activist, reworking the church building, showing hospitality several times a week for up to 35 students in his home, and he pulled together the team for the establishment of Ridley Hall, the Evangelical theological college at Cambridge, joining forces with Holy Trinity church to deliver lectures with Handley Moule. Then in 1882 Barton and several other incumbents also deeply affected by the Keswick movement worked with the students in the university in inviting Moody and Sankey to Cambridge. This season was notable, with many thousands flocking to hear the evangelist, and many of those later known as the 'Cambridge Seven' attest to those meetings having been instrumental in their spiritual awakening. However, the exhaustion of this term of ministry and outreach to university students caught up with

⁶⁸⁸ I. R. K. Paisley, *The 1859 Revival* (Belfast, 2009).

⁶⁸⁹ 'Emily Barton Papers', CMS Archives, ACC 137 F/1, p. 68.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84. Also see F. W. B. Bullock, *The History of Ridley Hall Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1941).

Barton and he had to spend several months convalescing.⁶⁹² He completed his active ministry in England with five years as secretary to CPAS, and visited over 500 clergy throughout England the Wales, encouraging them in their parish ministry and he died in 1908.

Barton's evident talent was well complimented by his second wife Emily, whose gifts of hospitality and her ability to run a residential household of twenty or more for several years were certainly part of his secret. His dedication to world mission was a defining part of his life, and his stint in Cambridge had a dual purpose of evangelism and discipleship, as well as inspiring young leaders and raising missionaries. He demonstrated the skills of the mission field, especially in the areas of ministry to elites and the foundation of places of education. His theological passions, which clustered around Keswick spirituality crossed paths with the formation of the second wave of the student missions movement, many of whom had the benefit of close personal care and discipleship.⁶⁹³ The aspect of Barton's ministry which was most enabled by the missions movement was his network of friendships, as well as the focus of his energies in raising up leaders for the global church.

Barton was undeniably part of the same network of missionary individuals and patrons, who were equally at home in India as in the new urban realities of England. Thomas Gaster and Barton stayed with the same individuals, visited the same churches and ministered in the same situations in Agra and Simla, just a few years apart. Gaster's Agra sermon references the work of God in the prayer meetings of Cambridge of which John Barton was a part as a student, and Barton was an exact

⁶⁹² 'In addition to special addresses to men, there was one general meeting each night for All; and as I sang in the choir, it was a wonderful sight to watch the rapt attention of hundreds of upturned faces, as that remarkable 'Apostle' from the far West arrested and held them by his simple racey style; his only eloquence being that of a Heaven-sent Power. Such men as Oscar Browning, Fellow of Kings, Welldon (now Bishop), Ryle (also Bishop), Appleton and others, sat daily under Mr. Moody; and other 'dons' also. The 'After-Meetings' held nightly in the Annexe for speaking individually to those who desired guidance and help, were crowded. Most of the 'Cambridge Seven' who went out the following year for the China Inland Mission, found these gatherings the beginning of a new life to them. Amongst these were the brother cricketers Stanley-Smith - Charles and J. K. Studd - Polhill - Turner - Beauchamp and very many others; including a remarkable Japanese named Wadagaki.' Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁹³ S. Maughan, *Mighty England do Good*, pp. 150-152; A. Porter, 'Cambridge, Keswick, and late-nineteenth-century attitudes to Africa', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 5 (1) (1976), pp. 5 -34.

contemporary in the student-focussed and parish ministry of Canon Alfred Christopher in Oxford.

Alfred Christopher.

Canon Alfred Christopher is a useful figure to inform a dialogue with the other figures discussed. He was converted under the ministry of CMS missionaries in India whilst he worked as the Headmaster of school in this important imperial outpost, and is an example of the British community being affected by Indian-posted missionaries, even as Gaster resonated so deeply in Simla amongst the British. This mission to the expatriates was almost by way of accident, for the main purpose of the CMS missionary was to reach the indigenous Indians with the Gospel. Like Gaster, for Christopher, the British Indian experience gave way to a lifetime at home. Christopher returned to England, and after ordination spent almost all of his ministerial career in one parish. He, like Gaster, founded in his local area Church Association and CMS branches, parochial schools, supported local ministry through visiting, and oversaw extensive building projects through raising subscriptions. He too, kept the subject of missions always in the mind of the congregation, and he too, though parish-based, exercised a ministry for himself and his church which was local rather than circumscribed by the specific geographical boundaries of the demarcated streets. He too, contextualised the need and mission of the local church to the specifics of the urban setting of the church. Gaster lived out these principles in relative anonymity in London; Canon Christopher, with a rather more profound reputation, exercised ministry in Oxford.⁶⁹⁴

The Cambridge educated A. M. W. Christopher was posted to Calcutta to take up the Principal's role at La Martiniere school for boys, where he worked between 1844 to 1849, accompanied by his wife, Maria.⁶⁹⁵ Upon arriving he took immediate charge of the school, which was in need of leadership, and began to turn it around, especially through raising standards of discipline and improving the behaviour and the character of the boys.⁶⁹⁶ It was during this time that Christopher credited his own conversion:

⁶⁹⁴ Christopher's numerous works include a review of Horatius Bonar's *God's Way of Holiness (The Record)*, 5 December 1864); *Quosque* (1909) and his editorial for the widow of a missionary in *Memoirs of Rev J.J. Weitbrecht* (London, 1863) as well as several tracts. The full list of his works, letters and ephemera is found in Reynolds, *Christopher*, Appendix V, pp. 434-455.

⁶⁹⁵ M. Carrin-Bouez and H. Tambs-Lyche, *An Encounter of Peripheries: Santals, missionaries, and their changing worlds, 1867-1900* (Bengal, 2008), p. 205.

⁶⁹⁶ Reynolds, *Christopher*, pp. 29ff.

In after years it was his favourite and frequent topic with him, that in trying to do his best for his boys, he was brought to feel his own spiritual limitations. He found that although he could give his pupils knowledge, he could not make them Christians. He could ensure that they knew right and wrong, but to do what was right, and to resist the temptation to do what was wrong necessitated divine power.⁶⁹⁷

There was a definite season of spiritual unease leading to a desire to resolve his relationship with God which Christopher described later: 'I was not converted when I went to India... I thank God that I knew enough truth to make me unhappy when I was not a Christian.'⁶⁹⁸ The climate did not agree with Christopher, and some time in 1846, he became largely deaf, and was to have an ear-trumpet for the remainder of his life. By the following year his thoughts were beginning to turn to ordained ministry, and he was also deeply impressed by the lives of the CMS Missionaries he knew around him in Calcutta, especially Rev J. J. Weitbrecht, whose memoirs he later compiled and published.⁶⁹⁹ Meanwhile Maria, who had been struck down by various illnesses, and had a stillborn child, was sent back to England after a doctor's warning that her body might not endure much longer in India. Christopher, felt he ought to stay at his post until a successor could be found. Over the next 2 years during his holidays he had several trips visiting the outlying and distant missionary posts, staying with CMS Missionaries and accompanying them on some of their journeys through the villages.

He spent the fortnight of his Christmas vacation in Krishnagur travelling via the riverside mission station of Agarpara, where Gaster would also serve for a short season 11 years later. On Christmas Eve he worshipped with an indigenous congregation alongside CMS missionaries Rev William Keane and Rev C. H. Blumhardt. Next, he and Keane visited Chupra, then Kapasdanga, Retnapur, and Solo, staying with the missionaries posted in each of these places, and became convinced that many of opinions of missionaries circulated at home in England and amongst the ruling Imperial classes were based on prejudice and ignorance and that the individuals and the works they oversaw were deeply impressive. He completed this tour at the

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁹⁹ M. Weitbrecht, *Memoir of John James Weitbrecht* (London, 1873).

end of January 1849, having also taken in two stations run by SPG in Mogra Hat and Barripur, and returned to Calcutta to receive his successor and return home, equipped with letters of commendation for Holy Orders from Dr Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta.⁷⁰⁰

He was also, crucially, given a letter of introduction to the mission-minded Bishop of Winchester, Charles Sumner, brother to the Archbishop of Canterbury and one of the most prominent and vigorous Evangelical bishops of the era, and as we have already noted, directly involved with Thomas Gaster and the founding of All Saints. Sumner opened the way for Christopher to have a curacy at St John's, Richmond, whereby, having satisfied a brief written paper, he ordained him to the post in a small ceremony in his private chapel at Farnham Castle on 8th July 1849. Rev and Mrs Christopher ministered under Rev John Dixon Hales. It was Sumner's custom to expect all those he had recently ordained to send him copies of sermons they had preached on three specific Sundays, and having done this, Christopher was rewarded by being asked to preach the following year at the castle on the anniversary of his ordination.⁷⁰¹ Hales was instrumental in forming the model of character emulated by Christopher in later life – not known for his eloquence or brilliance but by the strength of his dedication to the cause of Christ, and through achieving a thorough consistency in his conduct. It was during this season he learned to preach extemporaneous, without written notes, and where he continued his habit of travelling on behalf of the CMS.

Christopher, the curate, came to the attention of Henry Venn of the CMS who asked him to consider taking on the post of Association Secretary for the Western District of England, and he carried out this role from 1855-1859. The Association Secretaries were full-time overseers of the various local associations within a given regional district, monitoring and encouraging the vibrant life of these home mission groups, preaching extensively in churches, meetings and homes, and influencing the clergy in the cause of missions as expressed through CMS. The size and strength of the movement was counted in pulpits and Associations, whereby the associations were the local societies, and the pulpits the churches which asked for regular sermons on the subject of missions delivered by returning missionaries, the Secretaries and other

⁷⁰⁰ Wilson, letter, 3 November 1848. 'I only wish I could give him a Title in my own Diocese... he has raised Martiniere to the highest pitch of reputation and conciliated all the Governors in a remarkable manner... he is learned, amiable, pious person, particularly attaching his position and conduct', as well as being 'a thorough churchman in principle.' Reynolds, *Christopher*, p. 53.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

enthusiasts. As an indication of the activism assumed by this role, in the first year Christopher preached 92 sermons and spoke at 134 meetings. His district, covering the West of England from Berkshire to the Channel Islands held 126 sermons with meetings, 91 sermons on their own and 70 separate meetings. 18 new pulpits were secured, and 5 new associations formed, making a total of 60.⁷⁰² Four years of this strenuous ministry brought Christopher to the attention of several interested parties in Oxford who were looking for a pioneer for evangelical ministry in that city, and thus, after consulting Venn once more, Christopher took up the offer of the incumbency of St Aldate's in Oxford. The flow of individuals, recommendations and ministry did not only flow through the vehicle of Empire, but also through personal relationships formed on either or both sides of the world.

Meanwhile the needs of Oxford had not been neglected by the Evangelicals either, and the circumstances leading up to Christopher's appointment were in no way coincidental, but rather the result of a carefully laid and prayed-for strategy by Evangelicals, determined to see both town and gown impacted by the gospel. The concept was clear: what the city needed was a strong base from which to carry out mission-minded ministry, with convinced and clear preaching and Evangelical churchmanship. Lying in the surrounding edges of Oxford, and even in the centre, lay a number of sorely neglected parish churches, whose incumbents were either incapacitated, incompetent or impoverished. A financial step, pioneered by E. P. Hathaway, later to be ordained and to take on the rectorship of St Ebbe's himself, was to create a fund (known as the Oxford Fund) to supplement the meagre stipends of the livings of St Clements, St Aldate's and Holy Trinity. Then the core group began to canvass those who held the livings and were able to persuade Pembroke to let them secure the living of St Aldate's for the Simeon Trustees. This was an important move, for it ensured the continuity of ministry tradition within the parish, and the patronage is held by the Simeon Trustees to the present day. Once a fund was in place, and the particular patronage secured, Christopher was approached and took on the role in Oxford.

Still without a vicarage, he rented a house in Park Town, and began collecting for a school and parish fund. In the next years he built parish schools, rebuilt the church

⁷⁰² Ibid., p. 64.

itself, much of which had been used as the library for Pembroke, and fitted it for a much greater capacity, now approaching a thousand people. It soon became the influential centre of Evangelicalism in Oxford for a generation. At the end of his long incumbency is also built the church for the mission parish of St Matthews in Grand Pont as well as schools. He left St Aldate's with an influential list of congregants who had passed through, though with a fairly modest congregation of about seven hundred, having inherited a church with only seventy to a hundred in attendance on any given Sunday.⁷⁰³ By all accounts Christopher was a loving and gentle man, with humour, honesty and integrity marking out many of his dealings with others. Maria was accustomed to preparing meals for countless impromptu guests. His attention to the pastoral needs of others was notable through hospitality which they offered to undergraduates and congregation members. After his retirement in 1905 he continued to live and minister in the city, until his death in 1913.

Christopher was a convinced Evangelical and Protestant, and demonstrated his convictions positively in his hearty and tireless work for the cause of missions, but also through his involvement in ecclesiastical conflicts through the Church Association. The local Oxford branch was founded by him, and he was a regular member and attender, contesting vigorously for the Evangelical spirituality and style of worship and refuting the creeping ritualism he saw advancing steadily in and from Oxford. This brought him into confrontation with the prevalent opinions of Oxford life. In 1889, as a worthy counterbalance to the innovations of the Oxford movement, he was elected national Vice President of the Church Association, upon which occasion he wrote: 'I wish that all true-hearted Evangelical men realised the present danger of our church. If they did I am sure they would not be so apathetic, supine and unfaithful as such a time as this.'⁷⁰⁴ His spirituality was vibrant and heartfelt, with many prayers for the infilling of the Holy Spirit in spoken and written statements.

Christopher was an activist. Into his later years the industry exhibited by this Oxford clergyman was still remarkable, and he expected the same in any man wanting to

⁷⁰³ Atherstone traces the ministry of Christopher from the perspective of an undergraduate student and later colleague and biographer, Francis Chavasse. Andrew Atherstone, 'The Undergraduate Diary of Francis Chavasse 1865-1868' in Mark Smith and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *Evangelicalism in the Church of England, 1790-1890: A Miscellany*. *Church of England Record Society* 12 (2004), p. 118.

⁷⁰⁴ Reynolds, *Christopher*, p. 260.

serve as his curate. In correspondence to William Henry Griffith Thomas, who was later to serve as his curate before going on to become Principal of Wycliffe Hall, he writes of hard work and activism. ‘After four hours sleep, I wrote and posted 16 letters before 6.15.’⁷⁰⁵ He had worked at this pace for over 30 years in the parish and expected the same of any aspiring curate, including daily visiting of the 3000 members of the parish – every afternoon was spent in that pastoral discipline. He was a strenuous parish visitor, visiting members of the parish, giving out tracts, caring for the ill and practising hospitality. He was also a vigorous tract distributor, and though he wrote only a few of his own, they were popular. *Salvation in the Lord Jesus* sold 95,000 copies in a few years.⁷⁰⁶

Like Gaster, Christopher was deeply shaped by mission. The period spent in India, the enormous influence in his early discipleship which the CMS missionaries had upon him, and his period of representing the CMS nationally in no way diminished with his role as vicar of St Aldate’s. He instituted a mission breakfast in the Oxford Town Hall to which he invited hundreds, and over a light meal students and members of the city were addressed by a figure of international importance in the field of mission, such as Bishop Tucker of Uganda. He worked hard to gain a Hall in New Inn Hall street for the cause of mission, naming it the Bishop Hannington Memorial Hall, and many congregation members, especially undergraduates went on to become Bishops and Missionaries. He was elected Vice President of CMS in 1888.

The gentleman parson caricatured ably by George Eliot was not the person fitted for urban ministry in the mid- nineteenth century. Christopher, already proven as an able leader of institutions through his Headmaster experience in Calcutta, and a leader of networks through his CMS role, plied all his ample abilities into a style of leadership in ministry within and from the parish of St Aldate’s. At least four major building projects were carried out which demanded enormous strength of vision and organisational resilience. He made rebuilding easier by usually employing a relative as architect and builder, but as vicar he expected to be able to achieve success in pastoral work, visiting and preaching, the running of the parish responsibilities. The enormous fundraising work needed multiple competencies including financial, legal, theological and pastoral. Even at the age of 75 he raised £10,000 almost single-

⁷⁰⁵ Letter to William Henry Griffiths Thomas. Ibid., p. 262.

⁷⁰⁶ Christopher, *Salvation in the Lord Jesus* (London, 1889).

handedly for Grandpont, including a repair fund, negotiating the transfer of the land from Brasenose and negotiating with all builders. His influence grew steadily, so that many of his notable achievements are found in his later years, such as his instrumental work in the setting up of the Oxford Pastorate.

Christopher was also a narrator, telling a martial story. In the imperial age, it is perhaps unsurprising that the scriptural metaphors of conflict would make it into the theological discourse of the day, but it also spoke to expectations of appropriate character and demeanour. The vigorous language still appears surprising: ‘Let us pray that God may raise up in our church at this crisis men of the same brave, faithful spirit of our martyred Reformers, and use them to put to shame the feeble and timid Protestantism of the present day’⁷⁰⁷ Chavasse who later became Bishop of Rochester said of him that he ‘brought the courage of a soldier to the work of the church’ and Gore that ‘he was ready to do Battle.’⁷⁰⁸

Though Christopher was described as a ‘Churchman’ from before his ordination, the quality, character and fruit of his ministry was recognised cross-denominationally, especially amongst evangelical Nonconformists. Conspicuous among the tributes on his death was that of R. W. G. Hunter, a Nonconformist, who opined in the *Guardian* that Christopher ought to be considered ‘apostolic’. In common with nonconformist polity, much of Christopher's ministry was dependent on voluntarism – there were no endowments to the work, and no funds to fall back on – at all stages he was reliant on the goodwill of others, both within and beyond the congregation, not only for his own living costs, but also for the costs of the wider ministry. He was well-equipped to deal with this, expected it, and even thrived on the situation of healthy spiritual dependence which such a financial footing engendered.

One interesting figure becomes vitally important at this stage and links Gaster and Christopher together within the CMS home mission family – that of Rev. E.P. Hathaway. Not only was Hathaway a lifelong financial supporter and a dear friend of the Christophers. He was a key patron of the initial Oxford Fund which financed St

⁷⁰⁷ Reynolds, *Christopher*, p. 260.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 373. A tribute by the members of Oxford, including many dons, clergy and the Vice Chancellor described him also as a prophet in the city. The ministries of Simeon and Christopher are compared, p. 332ff.

Aldate's and enlarged the St Aldate's stipend, but furthermore, his second wife gifted her family home (Littlegate House/Holy Trinity House) to the ministry in Oxford once Hathaway had long moved from the city. Hathaway was initially known as a lay figure in the Evangelical world of the City of London but took over the nearly defunct parish of St Ebbe's, in Oxford, after his ordination, in 1868. The previous rector had become insane, and held onto the post whilst the congregation withered. Hathaway enlarged the rectory and built new parish schools almost immediately, built up close links with mission work, particularly in India, and began a work amongst undergraduates which thrives even to this day.

Within his first year of ministry in Oxford he also signed a deed to begin the process of setting up a voluntary society for the establishment of a church in the emerging district of Peckham. Hathaway was instrumental, then in the rebuilding and launching of Aldate's in Oxford, with Christopher, and the founding of All Saints Peckham, and the ministry of Gaster.⁷⁰⁹ The other trustees donors and signatories for All Saints Blenheim Grove contributed over £1000. Penrose Hathaway, Rev Stephen Bridge, Archdeacon John Sutton, Rich Davies Esq of Camberwell all gave £100 each, William Wainwright Esq and his family of Clapham (£50, £50, £50); The Surrey Church Association (£500); Thomas Gaster (£50) and Thomas and Mary Hamilton (£50, £50). Hathaway remained a trustee of the new church as well as a trustee of the St Aldate's fund.⁷¹⁰

Whether of more solidly middle-class stock, such as Christopher, or of more emergent social background, such as Gaster, an essential unity and flow of information, influence and friendships is unmistakable. Tucker, missionary Bishop of Uganda, had once attended St Aldate's under Christopher, then served as Hathaway's curate in Bristol and then returned many years later to England to raise further support for the

⁷⁰⁹ Lambeth Palace Library contains the original trust deed with signatures for the fund which enabled All Saints to meet the requirements of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a fund for the building and maintenance of a new church All Saints Camberwell. (Box number ref 08092).

⁷¹⁰ 17 February 1872, letter from Bp Winchester's office, confirming the named trustees and the £150 endowment fund, CERC. ECE/7/1/35240; Estate Commissioners file. 1866-1870. The list of donors demonstrated connections with patrons in business and the church. John Sutton Utterton was the Archdeacon of Surrey and was appointed the first Bishop of Guildford (1874-1879) to assist Sumner in his populous Diocese of Winchester. William Wainwright was an evangelical merchant, a sugar refiner who lived in a sizeable villa with his family overlooking Clapham Common.

work of CMS – coming to one of the last missionary breakfasts organised by Christopher in 1911. Both Tucker and Christopher relied upon Hathaway as a primary correspondent and mentor through many years of ministry.

Key individuals and names keep being mentioned wherever mission-minded evangelicalism started to impact the local areas in new parochialism, such as Charles Bridges, Henry Venn, Bishops Sumner and Samuel Wilberforce. On the strength of a single letter from Wilson, Sumner ordained Christopher, and Henry Venn's opinion was able to have enormous effect also. However, without a close reading in depth of the lives of these individuals, and the 'nameless parish clergy' it would not be possible to realise how interconnected these relationships were, despite being separated by enormous distances. Ministry in India both shaped and created opportunities in the UK and across the world. The missionary-minded parishes grew a next generation of missionary pioneers, such as Tucker and sowed seeds into the famous wave of missionary callings amongst universities which gave rise to the Moody and Sankey Missions and the Cambridge Seven at the close of the century.

CMS was not only a mission organisation supported by faithful contributors in the UK, it represented a way of life and thought, it fostered and reinforced set of primary expectations in terms of character, spirituality, task, friendships and collegiality. It represented a force within Britain of shared principles, shared relationships and shared models for mission. And from the fellowship of the CMS supporting family a template for new parochialism was found.

The leadership required within the new parochialism demanded an entrepreneurial and creative approach to structures and funding. The leader as clergyman had to raise money for individual projects, church buildings, staff members and expenses, and all the while doing this within the legal and ecclesiastical system of the Church of England to which they belonged.

Richard Hobson

The new parochialism flourished under Richard Hobson, the Pioneering Vicar of Liverpool, who consciously reflected on the leadership he had exercised, the moderated form for voluntarism and the impact that it had on the personal lives of those who adopted this approach:

‘I sometimes wondered whether it would have been better if we had had the church, halls and vicarage, completed to begin with, with a congregation and church endowments all in apple pie order; than to find ourselves in the position described in these pages. There is no doubt the flesh would choose the former, but I have long since come to the conclusion that for both minister and people, the latter was the better. There is just the same difference between the man who is the architect of his own fortune as the man who inherits all that the world can give. At all events, since we had to find so much, we endeavored to make what some would call a ‘virtue out of necessity’ though it demanded, besides faith, prayer, and effort, much wear of brain, heart and body.’⁷¹²

Hobson implemented almost every part of the new parochial mission strategy. He divided the large parish into districts and devised a system of assiduous and systematic visiting, six hours a day from Monday to Friday and the for three hours on Saturdays, and was a determined evangelistic preacher. Hobson himself became an exemplar, an inspiration, a hero whose story was celebrated by Ryle who considered him to be a model clergyman. In 1882, Ryle sketched out the effect of this ministry within a poor section of Liverpool after 14 years and commended the work to the national church:

I know at this moment a parish of 4,500 people, in Liverpool, with not a rich man in it, but only small shopkeepers, artisans, and poor. In a plain brick church, holding 1,000 people, built thirteen years ago, there is a simple hearty service and an average attendance of 700 on a Sunday morning, 300 in the afternoon and 950 in the evening. In three

⁷¹² R. Hobson, *Richard Hobson of Liverpool: the autobiography of a faithful pastor* (Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 2004), p. 278.

Mission Rooms there is an average attendance of about 350 in the morning, and 450 in the evening. The total number of communicants is 800, almost all of them working classes, and nearly one half men. I myself helped to administer the consecrated elements to 395, and I saw the hands that received them, and I know by those hands that many of them were dock-labourers, and foundry men. The worthy minister of that parish began his work alone, about fourteen years ago, with four people in a cellar. He has seen a church built; he has now with him one paid curate, one paid Scripture-reader, one paid Bible-woman, and a paid organist. But he has 82 voluntary Sunday-School teachers, 120 Church-workers, 17 Bible-classes with 600 adults on the register, and 1,700 Sunday scholars. The practical and moral results of the church work in the parish are patent and unmistakable. The congregation raises £800 a year for the causes of God..⁷¹³

Hobson was committed to the spiritual and personal transformation of those under his care, and like Gaster and Christopher, had a deep appreciation for the work of the Holy Spirit in personal transformation and the usefulness of extemporary prayer and prayer meetings. Hobson initiated within his own congregation a habit of praying every day for the sending of the Spirit: 'I had still, lest it might be forgotten, to remind our people of the little prayer for the holy spirit at one o'clock each day, when the signal gun goes off, viz 'Oh God, for Jesus Christ's sake, send me Thy Holy Spirit.'⁷¹⁴

Though Hobson was instrumental in the founding of the Church Association, he too was deeply influenced by a martial narrative, convinced that a battle along party lines for Protestant forms of worship and doctrine was necessary within the Church of England. He was more focussed on the analogy of the Spiritual Battle in his own parish setting:

Is it not evident that the Church must ever be in a militant state? Is it not one prolonged, never-ending conflict against sin, error, poverty,

⁷¹³ J. C. Ryle, 'Evangelistic Work at Home', Drill Hall, 3 October 1882, *Christianity in the Modern State, Official report of the Church congress, Derby. Oct 3-6 1882* (Derby, 1882), p. 82.

⁷¹⁴ Hobson, *Richard Hobson of Liverpool*, p. 276.

and the flesh, yet remaining in God's own people? The whole Christian Armour is necessary. The enemy is not only in the field but active. It is not worthy of the Captain who leads, nor the glory and honour of our God ever to desire that it should be otherwise, even though some feel badly wounded and well-nigh worn out. The Lord is with us: the issue is with Him.⁷¹⁵

And this theme of battle, which informed the story of mission and work in the new parochialism was also a recurrent theme within worship both for Evangelicals and for others who took a mission focus to the parishes such as William Walsham How. How was appointed as a suffragan bishop to give a dedicated mission focus on the East End of London. He further gave voice to his inhabited reality with the words of the Hymn "For all the Saints" whose middle stanzas especially emphasise the spiritual battle as normative for dynamic spirituality and mission:

- 2 "Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress and their Might;
 Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well fought fight;
 Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true Light.
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
- 7 "O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
 Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
 And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
- 8 And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
 Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
 And hearts are brave, again, and arms are strong.
 Alleluia, Alleluia!"⁷¹⁶

The new parochialism was an intentional blended response of the missional and parochial in the home setting. The Baptist congregations of London had an ambitious church-planting strategy which was missionary in outlook and intention, at one point determined to start a new church every mile in all directions spinning out from

⁷¹⁵ Hobson, *Richard Hobson of Liverpool*, p. 277.

⁷¹⁶ W. W. How, *For All the Saints*. The hymn was first printed in *Hymns for Saint's Days, and Other Hymns*, 1864.

Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle.⁷¹⁷ The Salvation Army fully subsumed the life of the church into the life of the mission society. And there were many organisations and societies springing from Evangelical roots and dedicated to wider social aims, governing a change in morals (such as drinking, prostitution, gambling, cruelty to children) and the indomitable YMCA. To the new parochial proponents, the Salvation Army were representatives of the intensely and solely missional model, the dry and ineffective and failing parishes the worst examples of the parochial.

The Salvation Army has given an impulse to our efforts at home evangelisation. It has forced us at last to see clearly what we had long guessed, that the pastoral, parochial, edificatory theory of Christian work, though good, is but one-sided. Before the Reformation, this theory was corrected by the wide spread of such bodies as the Preaching Friars; but since that time the parochial theory has had exclusive possession of the Church, and we now see the disastrous extent of the failure. The parochial theory lacks the spirit of aggression; and wherever Christianity ceases to be aggressive — we thank Mrs. Booth for having taught us the word — there Christianity recedes. The result of 300 years of reformed Christianity (which ought to be the most potent) is, that we find ourselves in the midst of what has been called a heathen England. What the Salvation Army has forced us to perceive is — not that we should fling away the parochial theory, and embrace exclusively the other, missionary theory, as they do — in that case, the failure would be far more disastrous, indeed, irretrievable — but that we must imperatively carry on a wide work of conversion, side by side with the work of edifying, with no jealousy between the two departments.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ C. H. S. Spurgeon, *The Waterer Watered. A Sermon* (No. 626) delivered on Sunday morning, 23 April 1865, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. 'We have never sought to hinder the uprising of other Churches from our midst or in our neighbourhood. It is with cheerfulness that we dismiss our twelves, our twenties, our fifties, to form other Churches. We encourage our members to leave us to found other Churches; nay, we seek to persuade them to do it. We ask them to scatter throughout the land to become the goodly seed which God shall bless. I believe that so long as we do this we shall prosper.'

⁷¹⁸ A. J. Mason, 'Evangelistic Work at Home' in *Christianity in the Modern State* (Report of Church Congress, 1882), p. 88; Joesphine Butler, 'Catherine Booth', *Contemporary Review*, Vol. LVIII July-December (Isbister & Co: London, 1890), pp. 639-654. See also P. J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil Down: the Salvation Army* (London, 2001), "Salvationists also drew on urban, commercial culture, militarism and holiness to articulate their religious vision." pp. 6, 119, 176, 180.

But it was the new parochialism which was a feature of missionary evangelicalism within the Church of England from 1851, and was made up of those eager inheritors of the Clapham and CMS priorities who remained convinced of their Evangelical and Protestant convictions, and applied them in a dedicated fashion to the mission fields at home.⁷²⁰ Only in this rebirth did the parochial and the missional models combine to startling effect.

⁷²⁰ S. Meacham, 'The Evangelical Inheritance', *The Journal of British Studies*, 3, (1) (November 1963), pp. 88-104.

Chapter 6

New Parochialism and Historical continuities: Telling the Story of All Saints from Gaster to Hurley: 1909-2002.

It is the diachronic resonance, of All Saints of old and the current All Saints which makes the history of congregation and leadership so unlike telling the history of men and women, for the congregation's life stretches beyond generations, and any current congregation has a life and legitimacy equal in value to that of the past. Interrogating the past and the journey to the present may well reveal recurring themes and instances in objectivity, or even in narrative itself, in manners which in the language of Hopewell speak of mythic resonance, or in Becker, of the interplay of models and congregational idioculture. The story of All Saints is best analysed as the interplay of intrinsic threads of narrative within a larger story. One narrative thread concerns the passing on of leadership and responsibility from one leader to another, from Thomas Gaster to Bob Hurley. The second thread is to interpret the history through the interplay of successive congregational models. The third thread is to examine the story of All Saints for the mythic or embedded narrative themes.

Narrative as Leadership and Succession

Thomas Gaster, the founding father of the congregation, passed the baton to his Son Percy, who looked after the parish from 1890 until Thomas passed away in 1909, at which point Percy made way for new leadership in the person of S. J. Carlton. Carlton, formerly named Rev S. J. Deutschberger, was a native of Silesia, a Jewish convert baptised in the Irish Presbyterian Mission in Hamburg in 1892. He moved to Cambridge, joined the Church of England, received a Doctorate of Divinity, gave regular lectures on theological subjects, served as an urban missionary with the London Jews Society at St Benet's Stepney. There he became a leader of the Messianic Zionists, secretary of the Presbyterian mission to the Jews (BSPGJ) and active in the area of street evangelism to Jewish people in London throughout 1900

and 1901 and a campaigner for the establishment of a Zionist state. Then he was appointed as curate at St Jude's, Mildmay (1901-4); then St Peter's, Cricklewood (1904-6) before moving to St Mary's, Peckham as curate until his appointment as vicar of All Saints in 1908.⁷²¹

Many of the older members of the congregation had moved away, and the parish records suggest that the neighbourhood was getting poorer. Through Carlton's competent and affectionate ministry, the congregation began to thrive again and by 1913 the church finances were robust.⁷²² Mission giving to the CMS in particular had risen significantly to £142 12s. 4 1/2d with a further £22 7s. 3d. to a CMS medical fund. There were 30 distinct organisations connected with the parish, including local missions and house to house and district visitors, Sunday Schools and activities in Mission Halls. Carlton wrote in his annual address 'Your keen interest in Foreign Mission Work in connection with the CMS makes me happy, as I am an enthusiast in my belief that this part of our service is nearest and dearest to the heart of our Lord.'⁷²³

After Carlton came the Rev F. A. Watney who led the church through the 1920's. An average week had four services on a Sunday, including an 8pm open air service, and four midweek services, as well as activities and Sunday schools operating across two sites. The church hosted regular and varied social events, prayer meetings and pieces of church business, and on taking office Watney and his wife spent time visiting congregation members in their own homes. His first few months included fundraising for a memorial at the west end of the church in honour of the fallen during the war, and buying a small cottage at Basing Place. Despite the war, in 1921 the congregational charitable giving to foreign mission was still sizeable, with £183 going to CMS, and the British & Foreign Bible Society receiving £49. Though the Church building required extensive repairs, funds were directed generously towards local mission work in the parish. A total of £172 was spent on local mission work including district visiting and district Sunday schools, and this did not include the funds needed

⁷²¹ See entry for S. J. Deutschberger in A. Bernstein, *Some Jewish Witnesses for Christ* (Operative Jewish Converts' Institution, 1909).

⁷²² M. R. Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Leiden, 2010), p. 196-198.

⁷²³ Rev. S. J. Carlton, 'All Saints Church, Blenheim Grove. Annual report for 1913, issued April 1914.' p. 4.

to run Sunday Schools in the parish church and the day to day operational budget of the congregation. The real business of repairs was carried out in 1922, with over £500 raised in a post war economy. The Church remained financially stable during this season of ministry, with 1926 recording approximately £1000 per annum going towards ‘the work of God, both home and abroad’, though there is evidence of a theological shift in the country, as support of foreign mission was transferred to the Bible Churchmen’s Missionary Society, and British and Foreign Bible Society instead of to CMS. BCMS (now Crosslinks) had split from CMS in October 1922 because of concerns that CMS was losing its evangelical edge and becoming theologically more liberal in its approach to the authority of scripture. Atherstone argues that the period of 1921-1923 involved heated and heartfelt disagreements amongst Evangelicals, some of whom came under the influence of transatlantic fundamentalist thought, and others who began to embrace a gently liberal or neo-evangelical approach. These controversies found their way directly into the Evangelical Anglican parishes, brought the missionary agencies under scrutiny for their position on infallibility, and in response, the All Saints members chose to lean towards biblical literalism rather than adopting the insights of higher criticism.⁷²⁴ All Saints under Watney, was one of the earliest parishes to transfer its giving, doing so in March 1823, thus clearly signalling where All Saints was positioned theologically within evangelicalism at the time. By 1927 the giving had risen to over £1500 per annum, which included an extra £200 offering to missions at home and abroad. Watney finished in 1929 after 9 years at the helm of the church.⁷²⁵

The next twenty years for the church were uncertain times, the missionary vibrancy which had been the engine of the congregation and the driving motivation for the clergy began to wane, the theological position moved gradually away from the definite evangelicalism of its first seventy years, and the liturgical traditions and architecture became more gently ritualistic and formal, the outdoor preaching and services ceased, the income declined, and there is evidence that slender resources

⁷²⁴ A. Atherstone, ‘Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the Inter-War Church of England’ in D. W. Bebbington and D. C. Jones (eds.), *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 55-75.

⁷²⁵ All Saints Church Records; Annual report for 1920; All Saints Parish magazine, July 1920; Statement of Accounts for 1922; 1923; 1924; 1925; 1926; 1927; 1928.

were spent on social activities such as badminton, tennis and sewing clubs.⁷²⁶ Bulky choir stalls were installed, in memory of a departed church member, and clerical seats were placed in a prominent position at either side of the aisle along with a communion rail. Relationships between the clergy of All Saints and the area Bishop, previously polite but uninvolved, became close and the area around Camberwell and Peckham was pastorally reorganised.

Rev T. Thomas succeeded Watney in 1930. Theologically, he was a convinced Churchman with the articulated theology of an Evangelical, in his first few months calling upon the congregation to pray for the Church of England which was ‘in danger of departing from the truth of Holy Scripture and the doctrines laid down in her formularies.’⁷²⁷ However, during this season the proportion of funds given to mission decreased, and the overall income shrank marginally. Rev F. I. Pocock became vicar in 1934, and though the general fund remained stable, mission giving slid by a tenth and was replaced only with a needlework circle.⁷²⁸ This appointment was also a short one of only a few years after which Rev H. K. Turner took up the post, and he served as vicar from 21st July 1938 until 10th September 1943.⁷²⁹ The activities of the church continued, with three services most Sundays, with most local mission work overseen by Mr Siddle, the London City Missioner joined to the parish, who ran the Basing Street Mission and Sunday schools. When both buildings suffered bomb damage he repaired and redecorated the mission rooms singlehanded. Despite the war damage there was time to celebrate, and the Bishop attended a garden party and other events which marked the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the church. When Turner left the church was left under the leadership of Rev S. K. V. Pearce who ran the parish until September 1950. Regular communicants across three services on a Sunday rarely went above double figures, with one or two seasonal exceptions such as Easter day.⁷³⁰ The pastoral reorganisation from 1944 (known in Southwark Diocese as “Scheme K”)

⁷²⁶ This drift from definite evangelical activities into social and sporting activities is ably described as a national phenomenon from 1920 in D. Erdozain, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, pp. 224, 225, 278.

⁷²⁷ T. Thomas, ‘The Church Magazine of All Saints’ (September 1931), p. 2; All Saints Church records; Statement of Accounts for 1930; 1931; 1932.

⁷²⁸ All Saints Church Records and Statement of Accounts 1934; 1935; 1936.

⁷²⁹ All Saints Church Records and Statement of Accounts 1938; 1939; 1942-1943. The income for the church before the war was approximately £1290 per annum, with church attendance slowly declining.

⁷³⁰ e.g. Easter day communicants from 1946 and 1949 were 90, 94, 95, 99. Special occasions and gift days would have between 35 and 40 communicants, normal Sundays between 7 and 19. The parish kept no attendance records.

was designed to begin to augment clergy stipends in return for a seven year fixed increase in PCC contributions to the Church Commissioners, a proposal which was accepted by All Saints.

A new era began six months later when Rev S. K. Hope took on the waning church and immediately began making significant changes, which are best seen with a brief examination of the church magazine which once again became a crucial vehicle for re-engagement with the local community, parish and congregation members.⁷³¹ The monthly parish magazine was relaunched as *The All Saints Herald*, the church address was given as Rye Lane Station, and though the magazine was priced at 3d. it had several local sponsors and through it the Reverend Hope made his appeal direct to the parish. He set out by articulating what Christian leadership meant to him:

Some of you may be asking, Well, why do we have a vicar? What is he here for? Some would answer by saying, 'He's come to baptise the babies, read out the banns of marriage and bury the rest. Well, the sooner that idea is buried the better.'⁷³²

Instead Hope wrote that the real and essential ministry of a vicar was to the 'cure of souls', explaining, mistakenly, that the phrase implies that 'all souls have a disease that needs to be cured, and the Bible says that every person has a diseased soul which only the Great Physician can cure.' He numbered the parish population at 8000, suggested many had still not heard the gospel and that he was committed, with the congregation, to seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in order to see the population of the parish reached and saved.

The early magazine [Fig. 21.] adopts a contemporary flavour with a black and white photograph of All Saints in 1951, but by the following year Hope had commissioned a stylised drawing with banners representing the ministries of the church, and a picture

⁷³¹ The role of the parish magazine is best explored in J. Platt, *Subscribing to the Faith? The Anglican Parish Magazine, 1859-1929* (Basingstoke, 2015).

⁷³² 'At the moment, apart from the faithful few our choir stalls are empty. Each Sunday our chancel presents a lamentable spectacle. The vicar and his lay reader enter the Choir Vestry only to find the choir has flown and we enter the church alone. This is such a contrast with what was once obtained here (in living memory of most) the choir was an important factor in the life of the church. The membership was substantial and those who came sang to the glory of God... we must immediately have some singers of all ages and both sexes. At the moment there are no qualifications for membership...' *All Saints Herald*, December 1951. p. 5.

of the Bible open at the Book of Psalms, with a small reference to Psalm 119: 11 (Thy word have I hid in my heart) and bold lettering declaring ‘Thy Word is Truth.’ March 1952 is emblazoned with pictures of the leaders of the Campaigners group, founded by Rev Colin Kerr in 1922 as an evangelical and evangelistic alternative to the Scouts. In June 1952, the church celebrated the ordination of Rev and Mrs Siddle with a Bible procession around the parish:

In order to demonstrate that it is in the **Open Bible** and that it is the **Bible** that has been the basis of the Churches work during these 80 years. Bible texts will be carried and at certain fixed points we shall all stop and read well chosen texts and sing well known Bible hymns and choruses.⁷³⁴

In June 1953, the entire edition was given over to the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, and much of 1954 referenced the Billy Graham mission at Harringay, with reports on the mission, including the involvement of the vicar and many congregation members and in 1955 wrote with great enthusiasm about Graham’s return to Wembley. To the discouraged Evangelicals in London, and especially to those at All Saints, the Billy Graham mission was not just encouraging but energising, and brought a fresh season of prayer, spiritual vibrancy and public proclamation to the streets and the youth ministry.⁷³⁵ S. K. Hope returned to becoming one of the story-telling leaders, narrating and reminding the congregation and parish of their evangelical heritage and their evangelistic purpose in the community of Peckham and of London as a whole. For a post-war congregation, this was a small rebirth, average weekly communicants growing to between 28-40, and the congregation remained fairly vibrant. In 1957 Hope moved on, and was succeeded by Cyril Denton, from May 19th 1958 and who led the church for a decade.⁷³⁶

The 1960’s presented deep challenges for the churches in Peckham, as immigration changed the population, and Southwark was remodelled with large scale social

⁷³⁴ *All Saints Herald*, June 1952, p. 1 (formatting in the original).

⁷³⁵ H. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, pp. 38, 40, 42, 50, 53, 54-5, 186, on the impact of Billy Graham missions; also W. K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Milton Keynes, 2007), describes this as a ‘crest of a wave generated by the Billy Graham crusade to London’ leading to many conversions and callings to ordination in the Church of England including Michael Harper. p. 8.

⁷³⁶ *All Saints Herald*, August 1968. p. 1.

housing programmes and the development of high rise blocks. The effect this had on All Saints was mirrored in congregations of other denominations struggling to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, such as the Methodists in Peckham.⁷³⁷ The population of the parish in 1961 had declined approximately thirty five per cent to 5239 in the previous decade, but by 1967 the surge in population, especially from Jamaican families, had led to forced sharing of terraced homes by two families. The church was stable, with an electoral roll of 112.⁷³⁸ The church finances were modest, the PCC unable to contribute much to the stipend and salary of clergy, and the overall budget for the church was just over £1000 per annum.⁷⁴⁰ Also of note during the Denton era is the pastoral reorganisation of 1960, which reordered the parishes in the area covered by the old parish of Camberwell. Camden Chapel, with over two thousand in attendance in the mid nineteenth century, was broken up, and the assets and parish given to St Giles. St Mark's was sold, as was St Jude's, and the parsonage of St Chrysostom.⁷⁴¹ This experimental and radical approach to the amalgamation of parishes had no local precedent, little evidential basis, and was almost catastrophic for the evangelical witness in the area, as the assets were taken from historic and endowed evangelical parishes and given to the catholic or liberal parishes instead.⁷⁴²

After the sudden death of Cyril Denton in 1968, Bill Wood was appointed as vicar. Bill was an approachable evangelical with charismatic theology, and a deep affection for the congregation. He introduced informal guitar-led worship into weekly services, allowed the operation of charismatic gifts in services and prayer meetings including speaking in tongues and prophecy, successfully integrated the Caribbean and English members of the congregation and focussed on the interpersonal and familial relationships within the congregation. The centenary of the parish was celebrated in

⁷³⁷ Beasley, *Building Together*, p. 9.

⁷³⁸ This season was vividly remembered by older Jamaican members of the congregation who spoke of the strains placed upon families by unscrupulous landlords who forced families to share houses without subdividing the properties into apartments. Thus a single toilet and a kitchen where shared by families with no efforts at matching the culture of these house shares. 'All Saints Camberwell, Parish returns' (February 1967). February attendance was 295 spread over 4 weeks, the average member gave £6 a year to the church.

⁷⁴⁰ Annual Accounts (£1363, 1951; £1532, 1952; £1238, 1953; £1135, 1954; £1656, 1956; £1920, 1957; £1385, 1958; £1502, 1959; £1396, 1960; £1228, 1961; £1050, 1962; £924, 1963; £1080, 1964; £1163, 1965; £1125, 1966; £1770, 1967).

⁷⁴¹ Scheme for Pastoral reorganisation, 9 December 1960. Church Commissioners and Bishop of Southwark.

⁷⁴² By the late 1990s only three evangelical parishes remained (All Saints, St Mary's and Christ Church).

1972 with commemorative services and an exhibition in the Church Hall. He remained part of the evangelical renewal groups and networks of London, including the emerging Ichthus Christian Fellowship, led by Roger and Faith Forster; the networks of Bishop David Pytches in Chorleywood and Youth With a Mission.⁷⁴³ The *All Saints Herald* continued for a few years, and then gave way to a monthly, then a weekly leaflet for members of the congregation, which reflected the diminishing expectations and the change of congregational models. [Fig. 22.]

The close sense of family and community which was of real benefit to relationships did not lead to substantial numerical growth. The negative effects of local church demolitions, and the successive threats of closure, were keenly felt by the congregation.⁷⁴⁵ In 1976 the Diocese formally asked All Saints to consider merging with the neighbouring parish of St Mary's. The pastoral committee had suggested that because All Saints was an older and more expensive building it ought to be demolished, despite full and expensive repairs having been carried out in 1966. Several churches had already taken this step locally, including Peckham Methodist Church which demolished older buildings and built a new community- focussed modern building in 1973. The proposal presented to the congregation by the Diocese of Southwark was to demolish both churches and build a new one on the site of All Saints which would serve both congregations. The notes speak of several attempts to demolish the church that had come from many quarters – first proposal for demolition was for the building of a new motorway, it was then to be demolished for a transport interchange, and finally the proposal from within the diocese.⁷⁴⁶ The joint statement from the PCCs of both churches to the pastoral committee urged the Bishop and pastoral committee to give a chance for growth in numbers and the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst:

Whilst we agree that it is right for the Diocese to take seriously the Sheffield report, we also suggest that evidence of growth as the work of the Spirit must

⁷⁴³ See W. K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain*, pp. 111-120, for background on Roger Forster and The Ichthus Christian Fellowship.

⁷⁴⁵ J. D. Beasley, *Peckham and Nunhead Churches*, p. 30, 32, 34, 41.

⁷⁴⁶ Notes from joint PCC meeting of All Saints and St Mary's, 2 February 1976.

also be taken seriously. Facts and figures can give us general guidance but allowance must be made for the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴⁷

In 1981 membership was at 50 members, and at the APCM in 1982 Wood stated that it had been a quiet year, with not been much encouragement in terms of growth and a difficult year financially.⁷⁴⁸ The pressure from the Diocese for pastoral reorganisation, meeting quota payments and the reduction of clergy posts is a common theme, recurring in all official correspondence from pastoral committees and the diocese for a full twenty years in the parish records. In May 1982 yet another scheme was proposed which would link the three evangelical parishes together, and in January 1985 yet again the Board of finance pointed out that four congregations (of which All Saints was one) had fewer than fifty members and an average giving of less than £2 per week) and ought to be amalgamated.⁷⁴⁹ Bill Wood's long tenure, during which he and the congregation struggled against declining income, dwindling membership and almost perpetual plans for pastoral reorganisation and demolition, gave way to several years of uncertainty and the post of vicar was suspended. The vicarage was lived in by a group from Ichthus Christian Fellowship, who hosted lunches with the small Anglican congregation. They had become a small multicultural group who had a sense of being an extended christian family, served pastorally by licensed Church Army officers. The services were run with different lay people sharing their hopes and sorrows. Tears and laughter in the services were not unusual. A portion of a poem by a church member summed this up well in 1989 reflecting on a church BBQ:

Time to talk, to air our views
To share our troubles and our fears
To wonder what the future holds
To seek God's guidance for the years

Where are we going, what will we do?
All Saints is us, it's me and you.

⁷⁴⁷ Response of All Saints PCC to the proposals of the pastoral committee, 13 June 1975.

⁷⁴⁸ Minutes of Special Church Meeting, 13 April 1981; All Saints Blenheim Grove, APCM minutes, 25 March 1982.

⁷⁴⁹ Camberwell Deanery, Cooperative Ministry report, DOC, 12 May 1982; Southwark Diocese, Board of Finance report on fairer shares, 29 January 1985.

We thank God for all that's past.
His loving arms to hold us fast.
His promises are sure and true
All Saints is us, it's me and you.⁷⁵⁰

The narrative of change and growth passed to a small group of committed members, most of Caribbean origin who joined the church in the 1960's, and a few older white members. The heartbeat of the church was a weekly prayer meeting, and as people moved away they were seldom replaced in equal numbers. Norma Francis, who had been adopted by a family in the parish whose parents had been part of Gaster's original congregation, had joined the Sunday school in the late 1940's, and narrated the changes in 1988-90:

a lot has happened this year – and quite a lot of us feel very strongly, that God's hand is upon this church... the social side has just blossomed... the numbers are probably a few less... the love and relationships have become deeper and more loving.⁷⁵¹

This being said, by the mid 1990's the small group of members faced the seemingly inevitable and agreed to the demolition of the vicarage, of the crumbling church and the decaying hall to make way for a housing project with a community centre that would be able to seat 45. The decision was so painful that the parish records indicate that conflict resolution experts were needed to mediate a split within the PCC which had been precipitated by what this decision represented to some – the death of the congregation.

By way of a sweetened deal to the demolition plans, the Diocese offered a part time priest-in-charge who would combine this ministry with an appointment as the Deanery Missioner, and Rev Robert Hurley was appointed on 7th October 1996. This was the moment when the life of All Saints began a substantial new chapter. The growth started slowly, building on the deep sense of family and community and a

⁷⁵⁰ N. Francis; 'Barbeque', 15 July 1989.

⁷⁵¹ N. Francis, personal report on the people and ministry of All Saints written in 1989 and 1990, including a collection of photographs, memorabilia, poems and portraits of congregation members.

strong vertical relationship to God in prayer, and a new confident and battling approach to leadership began.

Bob and Jane Hurley, and in time, a growing team of energetic younger church members fused with the existing congregation and started a new season of life and mission, reconnecting with the clear evangelicalism of the church, and beginning to pray, to imagine a positive future and to work tirelessly to reach their neighbourhood and revive the church. The congregation grew in fits and bursts, first amongst young adults and students, then amongst teenagers and then with young families. The congregation became reinvigorated with a new sense of purpose and community, with regular preaching, contemporary music, and work in schools. The vicarage was repaired, a new house in the parish was purchased. In time, Darren Moore joined as curate, while several students remained in the congregation after graduation and began to resurrect a ministry to children and young people. The story is ably told by Wraight and Wraight, by the Bishop of Woolwich, and by Bob Hurley himself, of how the congregation grew at a startling rate over the next few years, of how the narrative and the systems of decline were halted, and what it took spiritually and practically to start moving a congregation in another, more hope-filled and missionary direction.⁷⁵²

Thus the narrative told through the thread of ordained leadership comes into the present. After an interregnum, the author was appointed in July 2002, and served as vicar until moving to plant a new congregation in July 2010, after which Jonathan Mortimer succeeded me.⁷⁵³

The History of the congregation according to Becker's Models of Congregation

The second way of interpreting the story of parish is to do so using congregational models. When the researcher turns to All Saints Peckham, tracing the life of the congregation from Gaster to the spirituality of modern gangs, analysis of the existence

⁷⁵² H. Wraight and P. Wraight, 'All Saints, the Church Now Standing at Platform 1' in *Back from the Brink: Stories of Churches which refused to die* (London, 2006), pp. 13-25; R. Hurley, *Living Outside the Box: A Peckham Parable* (London 2006); C. Buchanan, *Follow up in 2003 to Mission in South East London* (London, 2003).

⁷⁵³ Aspects of the story of my own tenure are to be found in F. Orr-Ewing and A. Orr-Ewing, *Deep* (Carlisle, 2008).

of annual reports, parish magazines and news bulletins quickly and easily display the values of the leaders and congregation members in any given era. It was found that congregational self-identity, and the manner and terms by which the congregation related to itself, followed the types outlined by Becker; a house of worship, a family, a community engagement congregation, or a leader. The orientation towards the community of Peckham adapted over the life of the church largely along the pathways predicted by Roozen, in that it followed successive models of congregation that were alternately civic, sanctuary, activist or evangelistic. The congregation began in Gaster's initial set up phase with an emphasis on worship and on building a house of worship; but within a few years, after the establishment of the congregation, the success of the ministry amongst adults and children, and the flourishing of the church, Gaster addressed the church and presented the accounts in the annual address: 'the Rev'd T. J. Gaster ...to his congregation.' Here is the leader model being evidenced, and he is also depicted as the father to the congregation.⁷⁵⁴

Upon his withdrawal from ministry and his eventual passing away, his successor, the Rev Carlton, changed the format and the appearance of both the annual report and the parish magazine to represent stability and competency. By 1913 the report is more administratively tight and seems to support a civic and institutional bent. This continues through the church magazines during 1920-1927. As the years progress the nature and character of the congregation moves from one phase into another. Regardless of whether the theology of the leaders remains the same, the nature, self-understanding and public portrayal of the congregation shifted approximately every decade. In the 1930's the expensive colour and the higher quality of the magazine started to suggest a new boldness in leadership, and this is conveyed within the pages. In 1942 the annual report was a single hand-typed sheet of paper, recording the effect of the Blitz upon the streets and buildings, and rushed out in a time of scarce resources. Despite the ravages of bomb damage and the war, the church was encouraged during the 1950's and by developments in evangelism through the Billy Graham mission in 1954, in which congregation members and clergy are intimately involved. The congregation determined its model as evangelistic.⁷⁵⁵ After the racial

⁷⁵⁴ P. E. Becker, *Congregations in Conflict*, pp. 15, 126-148. P. Ward calls this approach to reading a congregation 'ecclesial ethnography' or 'empirical ecclesiology'. P. Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology: The gospel and the Church* (Leiden, 2017), pp. 62, 68.

⁷⁵⁵ S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularization and Social Change c.1920-1960* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 254-259.

estrangement of the early twentieth century, the congregation, which had started to grow again, began to use words like ‘community’, and as it became smaller, the congregation were able to make a virtue out of necessity and celebrated their intimacy and their sense of ‘family’.⁷⁵⁶ During the early 1970s the parish attempted to print a more contemporary style parish magazine - embracing a new ‘community’ identity, before returning back to the leader model of self-understanding upon which it began. This last phase restarted with the appointment in 1996 of Rev Bob Hurley who returned the stance of the church to the local population to the activist model.

Church growth and organisational growth literature also help with a reading of the congregation over time, as the change in numbers affected self-understanding, confidence and morale. Church numbers are buoyant during the ministry of Gaster, with over 300 children in the afternoon service alone, but 100 years later, in 1996, although there had been signs of growth, attendance had sunk back to 20 again – the same number that attended the first service held in Gaster’s home. However, after the appointment of Hurley in 1996, this began to climb steadily and the congregation became the fastest growing church in the Diocese of Southwark, with about 750 adults, and 1000 children associated with the congregation and clubs by 2010.

Learning a Parish Story

The third way of understanding the story of a parish is to accept the idiomatic nature of parish culture, and its complex and multi-layered network of signs, which form a unique dialect of story and symbol. As Hopewell suggests that story expresses the intricacy of congregational life, and that one should expect to see this demonstrated in a number of ways. Firstly, that the congregations’ self-perception is primarily narrative in form; secondly that the congregation’s communication among its members is primarily by story; and thirdly, that by its own congregating, the congregation participates in the narrative structures of the world’s societies.⁷⁵⁸ A congregation by its very nature is protagonist, effecting and responding to the

⁷⁵⁶ Warner, *New Wine and New Wineskins*, p. 283, shows successive changes in models of church in a single congregation over forty years.

⁷⁵⁸ J. F. Hopewell, *Congregation*, p. 46.

narrative of the cultures, peoples and places in which it meets, acts, reflects and worships.

The historical and narrative importance of Thomas Gaster to the life of the leaders and members of the congregation of All Saints Peckham in the contemporary era underlined how historical continuities and discontinuities are constituent to present realities. The author was appointed to the role of vicar of All Saints Peckham (Camberwell), having previously served a curacy in St Aldate's Church in Oxford, and led the church for seven years. My role afforded me privileges of access to the site, the records and the collective memory of the congregation. My familiarity with the locality of the parish gave me detailed understandings of dynamics and neighbourhood development, a knowledge of the geography, and an understanding of the legal and vocational relationship between parish, priest and people. But there were no formal existing histories of the congregation or the church readily available. Although All Saints is mentioned within local history these references are tangential, and Nonconformist church life in the area is better documented.⁷⁵⁹

The author's own pastoral leadership required discovery, interpretation and then retelling the story of the congregation, in order to lead effectively in the contested and confusing situation in which a modern Peckham congregation found itself. This narrative-leader role was performed successively by previous leaders, either consciously or unconsciously, but those who did this most ably, managed to use a re-articulation of story to engage authentically with the underlying, resonating stories of the congregation in a manner which motivated and energised the congregation itself. Sometimes the local congregation participated in large sacred stories, such as the mission to London in 1954 and 1955, other times the congregation was carried along in the stories of deprivation, conflict and despair of urban deprivation, as in the 1980s.

The role of distant and recent history in congregational narrative began with stories set in the mid 1950s in the oral history of the elderly congregation members, all bar

⁷⁵⁹ Peckham local history is documented extensively in J. D. Beasley, *Peckham and Nunhead Churches* (London, 1995); *Building Together: The Story of Peckham Methodist Church: A Concise History of the Buildings Used by the Wesleyans and Methodists in Peckham* (London, 1985); *Peckham in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1973); *The Bitter Cry Heard and Heeded: The Story of The South London Mission of the Methodist Church 1889-1989* (London, 1990).

four of whom were of Caribbean descent, who recalled and recounted to me their experience of alienation and exclusion. In a series of conversations, carried out over several years in homes and informally on the church site certain themes emerged amongst the details. Universally, they spoke of the original and founding story, including the values and leadership of the congregation from 1867, and a recurring new identity of 'All Saints' as a present community designator which, by virtue of membership and worship, wove a disparate set of individuals into a unity of purpose and belonging. They spoke of a shared Anglican identity, their sense of being called to England from abroad to help rebuild the nation after war had devastated London and much of the cities. Decades after the events they described, they relayed and relived their shock and grief about being misunderstood for many years in their local church – the resentment of older white members refusing to sit next to them, and the rebukes they received from authorized leaders in the early 1990's, when the Jamaican members were scolded for raising their hands in worship, for prophesying and for calling out in the services. They spoke of their struggle with the clericalism of certain leaders during the challenging phases of the congregation's story, which had disempowered them. This was contrasted with their enduring love for those clergy who championed the cause of God and loved the work of the Spirit. Their spiritual lives were sustained with acapella renditions from the Sankey hymnbook; their refuge was in weekly prayer meetings, and their persistence in prayer sustained their morale as the church declined through the 1980's and as the buildings fell into disrepair and faced demolition. They told a story of how a new hope-filled vicar called Bob called time on the demolitions and allowed them to dare to build again, how he stood with them against the institutions of Diocese and Council, how the congregation began to grow again and start to regain its Evangelical theological core and missionary practise. They remembered a brief season of spiritual flourishing in the 1980's during charismatic renewal, when YWAM ran a school in the hall and contemporary worship was introduced. They told their version of the appointment of my predecessor, Bob Hurley, and his epic struggle to install heating in the church and save the hall from collapse, and they spoke with pride of the young people and students who started an evening service. All of this retelling was a sign of their affection for the details in the lives of real people. Grace and Amos Komolafe, Pentecostal Nigerian pastors, who with a Four Square Gospel congregation had met to pray and worship in the barely-used building of All Saints, told the author of how they felt called to merge their own congregation and

join the leadership team of All Saints, and become committed to a prayerful multicultural congregation into the future. In this, the Jamaican and African congregation members were storytellers and keepers of oral tradition an oral history laced with theology. Their spirituality was deeply experiential and communitarian, and had rich roots which twisted with the local history of All Saints. Ian MacRobert's description of African Spirituality at the roots of Pentecostalism seems very apt:

‘it was in myths, legends, folk tales, riddles, songs, proverbs and other aphorisms that African theology was codified, and transmitted from generation to generation. In the New World, these oral narrative methods continued to preserve and communicate many African leitmotifs which were now reorchestrated in an ostensibly Christian form.’⁷⁶⁰

These stories were framed also in a biblical narrative or in lessons for discipleship. Icy, who dusted the choir stalls one morning (though we had no choir) and retold of their congregational experience of decline, collapse and reawakening, using the stories of wilderness, exile and the promised land: ‘If we do not learn the lessons of the wilderness, He will send us back there again.’ Mavis scolded the author at the first Church Council meeting, bringing up an A. O. B. with a grimace and a stern warning, provoked by a rumour we had asked for a contribution towards catering at an Alpha course: ‘We ‘aint never h’asked for money at h’All Saints, and the Lord, ‘e h’always provide.’⁷⁶¹ The first formal prayer from the Church Warden Guerlene after the author was inducted went something along the lines of: ‘O Lord, we thank you that you have given us a vicar, but we pray now, that just because we got a vicar, there be no slackin...’

Certain stories were totemic events, made more significant with the retelling. There was the moment a red-haired lady came to carols by candlelight, her tresses caught fire, and in that crisis she experienced a conviction of sin, was converted and went on to become the parish secretary. Another oft-repeated story was of the former vicar,

⁷⁶⁰ I. MacRobert, ‘The New Black-Led Churches in Britain’, p. 122 in Badham (ed.), *Religion, State and Society in Modern Britain* (Lampeter, 1989), pp. 119-143.

⁷⁶¹ Though this was plainly not the case in all areas, she was referring to the value of hospitality which should always be given not paid for.

Bob, who once got exasperated in a sermon and threw a kneeler into the congregation. Symbolic moments of positive change were celebrated, remembered and retold, like the raising of beautiful blue new cast iron gates which were erected by a local artist based on church children's drawings of angels. The tales of 'Battles with the Diocese' were exemplified by the warning signs on a condemned building 'by order of the Archdeacon' which meant their weekly prayer meeting was not able to meet in the hall as it had for 25 years – but that they broke in every week, because ' 'aint no-one gonna stop us from prayin'.' In this titanic spiritual battle through the generations, everyone wanted to demolish the church, including the Bishop, but despite all this 'God had other plans'.

There was an unmissable mythic narrative framework which emerged from extensive conversations and storytelling. Qualitative data such as these stories is historically and culturally instructive alongside the quantitative data of attendance and finances. Though the quantitative aspects served to interrogate the recollections, the facts and figures give little indication of narrative or motivation. These idiomatic stories are theologically rich, culturally embedded, and include a soft Calvinistic theme of providence. The providential empire which had turned its attentions to Jamaica and Nigeria had now rebounded and sent new missionaries to revitalise the decaying heart of London.⁷⁶²

In the narrative framework of this congregation, God was self-evidently sovereign over life events, and religious authorities are usually wrong, politically motivated, obsessed by money and do not trust the word of God and have no faith in the Gospel. In the story of 'All Saints Peckham' the aspirational values of the community are to be honest, to be a genuine family drawn from many races, to look out for each other no matter what original culture and background people may come from. In this story there is a theology of providence, summed up in the phrase: 'God put us in Peckham for a reason'. For the battling matriarchs of the church, successive chapters of struggle, dishonour and prayer began to give way to seasons of favour, growth and acceptance. This culminated in June 2010 with a live broadcast of Pentecost on the BBC to several million people, and in July 2010, with a visit from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. As he walked around the site he was told of these stories of personal and

⁷⁶² Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 366, 435.

physical transformation, of a church which refused to die, and seeing the evidence of a full church and a transformed site, the Prince mentioned that God's providence had become evident to all.⁷⁶³ Many of the theological themes and missional imperatives of the story-telling father of the church had returned, carried in the arms the oral theology of the Caribbean matriarchs, the new story keepers who passed on the stories to the next generation. Though some see these oral and theological narratives as a symptom of Jamaican and Nigerian Pentecostals in the Britain, clearly this approach to theological discourse also belonged to the Caribbean and African members of present day All Saints:

The real theology of the black Pentecostals is not generally found in what is written, but what is said and sung and done. It is in the oral forms of the dramatic sermon, the testimony, the story, the proverb, the chorus, and even the account of a dream or a vision: methods of communication which are available to all and understood by all.⁷⁶⁴

Perhaps these storytellers are the most obvious successors to the missionary evangelicalism, of All Saints' foundational culture. with their themes of worship, mission, adventure, lay leadership, participation and gospel preaching.

There were also continuities between Thomas Gaster and the current author – as both held the same role, walked the same physical spaces, had pastoral and missionary obligations to the inhabitants of the same streets, and worshipped in the same building with an Evangelical Anglican congregation. And yet the discontinuities were perhaps starker: Peckham was no longer a new Anglo-Saxon middle class suburban community in a city at the heart of the Empire. Now it was an inner-city neighbourhood in the middle of a sprawling metropolis approaching ten million inhabitants, and the racial profile of the community was dramatically altered, having been home to high proportions of ethnic minorities for several decades. The parish became blighted by multiple indicators of deprivation, including violence, poverty and gang involvement. The modern era had also brought with it changes to transport

⁷⁶³ The event was recorded by Clarence House [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuJFBqlzEA>].

⁷⁶⁴ MacRobert, 'The New Black-Led Churches in Britain', p. 133.

networks, the introduction of the welfare state and social housing.⁷⁶⁵ Despite the initial similarities, these differences were arguably more fundamental.

⁷⁶⁵ [Key_Southwark_Housing_Data_January_2013_Final.pdf] [Southwark.gov.uk,] (February 2013), p. 13, puts the proportion of social housing in the borough of Southwark at between 54% and 43% between 2001 and 2012.
[<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s32592/Appendix%201%20Investing%20in%20Council%20Housing.pdf>]. Accessed 19 November 2013.

Conclusion

We always hope that future generations will be proud of what we build.⁷⁶⁷

This thesis asked a number of questions of Thomas Gaster and All Saints Peckham. Was Gaster able to bring the experiences and lessons of India to the newly-built streets of Peckham? Was his vision and successful ministry at All Saints normal within Evangelical Anglicanism at the time, and how much did the growth of All Saints fit into more general themes of parish ministry? Starting from the analysis of one specific parish and a pioneering clergyman, and then widening the search, we have gained a view of the new parochialism which better explains that the birth of the Golden Age of the parish was motivated by the methods and motivations of the foreign mission field in general and the Church Missionary Society.

The renewed parish focus of Anglican Evangelicals in the second half of the nineteenth century, whilst built on some of the reforms of individual pioneers in the Hanoverian age, multiplied and led to unprecedented growth as the century developed, and was inextricably linked to the renewed missionary mentality and methodology. Evangelicalism was subscribed to by between a quarter to a third of all clergy and parishes, with a third of Anglican parishes financially supporting CMS by the end of the century.⁷⁶⁸ Despite contemporary assumptions that Evangelicalism has a natural congregational bent, this was not the case during the era of the new parochialism when ‘The Methodist made the world his parish, the Evangelical tended to make the parish his world.’⁷⁶⁹

The *Building on History* report, however, warns that assumptions of church decline

⁷⁶⁷ L. Green and C. Baker, *Building Utopia: Seeking the authentic Church for new communities* (London, 2008), p. 1.

⁷⁶⁸ A. F. Munden, *The Anglican Evangelical Party in Carlisle*, p. 28, pp. 18-30. This proportion had risen from between 300-500 clergy at the end of the eighteenth century. By 1847 Francis Close estimated the number to be at about 5000 clergy. F. Close, *Three Lectures on the Present State of the Parties in the Church of England* (Cheltenham, 1847), p. 32. In 1853 William John Conybeare estimated at approximately 5500, from a total number of about 18,000. W. J. Conybeare, ‘Church Parties, an essay’, *The Edinburgh Review*, 98 (1853), pp. 338, 339. Balleine estimated that one third of all parishes could be described as Evangelical by the end of the century. Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party*, p. 314.

⁷⁶⁹ A. S. Wood, *Thomas Haweis: 1734-1820* (London, 1957), p. 16.

often presuppose a starting point of a previous golden age of the parish as if churchgoing was ever nearly universal, which it was not.

The dynamic church planting, perhaps by virtue of its entrepreneurial bent, lacked a wider strategic rationale. Though many churches were built by property developers and landowners, as in the Boltons, some by local subscription, and some out of party spirit, most were born of evangelical and missionary zeal. Wolffe argues that too many churches were built during this period, leaving financial, human and leadership resources too thinly spread to be sustainable under the pressures that the post-imperial world would bring.⁷⁷⁰ In the foundational years many of these parishes grew rapidly and the capacity of the buildings made sense. However, without highly capable and missionary leadership, and without effective methodology or evangelical motivation, the practical new parochialism was evidently not sustainable. Or at any rate, it was neither willing or able to adapt convincingly to the cultural, sociological and theological challenges to ensure the same level of success in the twentieth century.

This research thesis has examined Evangelical missionary theology incarnated in a local church, and specifically a Church of England parish in London. The method has been to study in detail the founding methodology of the first generation, by asking what form the tradition which was passed down took, both in teaching and practice. Could a reassessment of these foundations genuinely lead to revolution in praxis and vibrancy in a different age whilst retaining authenticity? Bebbington is at pains to point to significant discontinuities between Evangelicalism of the nineteenth century and its antecedents: 'notwithstanding the weighty legacy from the past the emergence of evangelicalism did represent a revolutionary development in Protestant history.'⁷⁹⁴ The discontinuities between the historic nineteenth century and contemporary British Evangelicalism are perhaps even more profound. The leap to the present, even with conscious retrieval, is fraught with difficulties, not least in clearly identifying the natural descendants of the nineteenth century evangelicals.

This specific research project and the concomitant pursuit of historical continuities is

⁷⁷⁰ J. Wolffe, 'What can we learn from the Victorian Church' (Hooker Lecture, Exeter Cathedral, 2010), p. 6, and *Building on History Report*, p. 8.

⁷⁹⁴ D.W. Bebbington, 'Response', p. 432 in M. A. G. Haykin and K. J. Stewart, *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, pp. 417-432.

neither arbitrary nor constructed. The researcher was for seven years the vicar and leader of the congregation, and as such has privileged access to the history, inhabiting even the same pulpit as the predecessor, walking the same streets and having access to previously untouched archive and memorabilia, the earliest era of which is analysed within this thesis. Positive engagement with this brief history began to lay a spine of growth and leadership for a further turbulent present age. The author endeavoured to reference the congregational forebears and spiritual forerunners of what had by then become a multi-cultural and young congregation in an area notorious for violence and gang tension. It is the intimate and involved experience of living within and leading a single local congregation that reveals the richness and depth of Christian existence in the present, and helps inform a caution over reductionist simplification of the past.⁷⁹⁵ As Geertz enthuses for a thick description of culture for accurate readings of culture, so a thick description of the life of congregation offers the promise of profound rebalancing of assumptions about history, and offers possibilities for renewal of the contemporary.

The quest for a *contemporary, missionary, Evangelical and historical church* is currently well-documented. The fresh-expressions movement and Mission-Shaped Church Report articulated this vision clearly but both are approached as experimental, without recognising that several of the new initiatives are in fact old. For example, how many would imagine that congregations in schools, police stations, train stations and hospitals are examples of their Victorian past, as they were in Peckham? Few have deeply engaged with any specific historical example for pursuing this quadrilateral, and modern evangelicalisms within Britain seldom engage with the Victorian era during which their tradition was the dominant form of religious Anglican and Nonconformist expression, and which built many of the buildings that current congregations inhabit. It is indeed a theological and historical amnesia. As a token of this shallow analysis, the Church of England's The Mission Shaped Church report makes only a tangential reference to the indebtedness to history by exploring the three-self principles established by Henry Venn⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹⁵ F. Orr-Ewing and A. Orr-Ewing, *Deep* (Carlisle, 2008); F. Orr-Ewing and A. Orr-Ewing, *Millennials* (Oxford, 2010); H. Wraight and P. Wraight, *Back from the Brink* (Swindon, 2006) all tell aspects of the All Saints Peckham story since 1995.

⁷⁹⁶ 'The necessity of, and the path to, maturity for fresh expressions of church has already been shaped by great mission thinkers of the past such as Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society.' *The Mission Shaped Church Report* (Church House Publishing: London, 2004), p. 120. Though Venn imagined a self-sustaining national church rather than congregationalism.

Others have pursued an engagement with the pre-Minster model of church⁷⁹⁷, Monasticism⁷⁹⁸, or Celtic Spirituality for renewal.⁷⁹⁹ But almost without exception these historical examinations have been broad-brush, and seldom referencing the life of a specific pioneer leader or pioneer-planted church within the UK.⁸⁰⁰ All Saints Peckham is one such congregation, planted by a missionary pioneer curate, founded in an urban and plural context and recording rapid growth in an era of great change.

Thus this thesis makes an important contribution to a growing field of theological study. While theologians working alone, apart from the specific richness and troubles of a local congregation may pursue a disembodied vision, the local church is always, unavoidably situated in a particular locale, and even, in the case of a parish church, inhabiting the same geographic space inter-generationally. Most churches engage with the historical roots of their tradition and denomination whether they are aware of it or not. Historical engagement is as important for methodology and leadership as it is for dogma, and perhaps more so.

It has been argued that the emergence of a new and energetic approach to the Anglican parish between 1851 and 1890 was informed and inspired by the overseas missionary practise and motivations, especially those of the Church Missionary Society. Through the scrutiny of a single leader and parish, then set into the context of his contemporaries we have obtained a fuller picture of a form of congregational and parochial leadership which led to the re-imagining of the parish.

The Introduction included a biographical sketch, as well as introducing approaches to historical and congregational study that together would be used in the exploration of this thesis, and suggested that a narrative approach to leadership and congregation would yield a richness to the data which could facilitate contemporary continuities.

Chapter One explored the foundational Indian missionary phase of Thomas Gaster's ministry, from his arrival in the country, his approach to reporting, leadership and

⁷⁹⁷ G. G. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity can Reach the West. . . Again* (Nashville, 2000).

⁷⁹⁸ P. D. Roderick, *Evaluating Fresh Expressions* (Canterbury, 2008), pp. 135f.

⁷⁹⁹ N. Scotland, 'Charismatic Christianity and the appeal of Celtic Pneumatology', *Anvil*, 23 (3) (2006), pp. 179-190.

⁸⁰⁰ G. G. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 'The Celtic Christian Movement proceeded to multiply mission-sending monastic communities, which continued to send teams into settlements to multiply churches and start people in the community-based life of full devotion to the Triune God.' p. 35.

conflict. Especially important was a recognition of the entrepreneurial style of leadership which pioneering and missionary experiences demanded. Gaster embarked upon language study, early ministry in Agra and a third posting in Simla, during which time his spirituality, preaching and theology could be further scrutinised.

Chapter Two followed Thomas Gaster as he engaged in ministry in Camberwell and Clapham, re-engaging with the home church and congregation of the Clapham sect which had also given birth to CMS. The semiotic universe of the missionary evangelicals was under examination. This short season of ministry nevertheless gives the researcher an opportunity to scrutinise a further two parishes from the perspective of the same narrator.

Chapter Three records and analyses the birth of a ministry in Peckham and the foundation of All Saints. The actual process by which Anglican parishes were established and planted by missionary evangelicals is of interest, for it is seen that the missionary praxis of CMS in India is fully utilised in the new urban home front of London.

Chapter Four digs deeper into the story of the church from 1874 to 1909, further exploring the nature of congregational life, and the role of the leader as narrator, father and hero in the Victorian Evangelical parish.

Chapter Five gives consideration to the developments of the English parish from 1851-1900, with a specific focus on a missionary Anglican expression which re-imagined and reapplied the idea of parish to suits a new context. This tests the thesis by looking for comparisons amongst other clergy such as Alfred Christopher and John Barton with a similar missionary background and explores the role of possible other motivational models such as those pioneered by Champneys. The chapter showed the importance of voluntarism, parish visiting and the polemic edge of Evangelical theology.

Chapter Six brings the story of the congregation into the contemporary era, searching for historical continuities and suggests that congregational stories do follow the insights of Hopewell and the congregational models of Becker. The embedded

researcher is able to discern these deep narrative themes and test them against other extrinsic data. The story of All Saints is an interplay of three narrative threads, of successive leadership, successive congregational models, and embedded narrative themes. It is shown that the originating and foundational values of a congregation can reinvigorate a congregation and give leaders important adaptive tools for transformative leadership.

Thus is it appropriate that we interrogate the churches of the past with questions which are being posed by the challenges of the present, or perhaps just bring these older voices to the table as conversation partners. Are there particular models of mission which can be observed in the theory and practise of local urban missionaries of Victorian London which might inform, renew or challenge contemporary mission praxis? These Victorians had an informed approach to the parish which subdivided residential and physical areas into districts, and a concomitant commitment to visiting by the clergy and by district visitors. Prayer meetings were important, as was an awareness of global mission considerations alongside local expression. The network of like-minded individuals who linked resources and contacts and a shared theological language and aims was invaluable. Even though there were passions and theological divisions between parties and factions within the Church of England, the martial mindset served to encourage the development of new congregations and the building of new churches. This was an era when to speak of spiritual battles was to motivate an army to fight using spiritual weapons, whether they were members of the Salvation Army, or supporters of CMS. Effective leadership was narrative, and structured a universe of heroes and villains, of winning and losing and overcoming struggles which translated well to an empowered laity. Finally, the non-particularised functions of clergy, involving the leadership of people, project management, fundraising, and the use of both hard and soft power was embraced and celebrated. Budgets were raised by spiritual leaders, rather than managed by them, and culture was formed by clergy whose bond with congregations was often profound, lasting and emotional.

Thomas Gaster's entrepreneurialism and conviction, his industry and focus are admirable, his wooden or formulaic biblical expositions significantly less so. The zeal for language study and preaching, and the level of financial and personal sacrifice that missionaries such as the Gaster family were prepared to endure are startling and no

longer commonplace in the British Church. The lifelong commitment to applying missionary principles to the new urban realities shows an adaptive capability in ministry which few contemporary clergy feel equipped to exercise.

Afterword

For Churches Seeking Instruction from an Evangelical Past.

Liberalism and localism are strangers to each other; Evangelicalism and localism are friends.⁸⁰¹

We treated our churches as though they were all oak trees – able to grow to any size and live virtually for ever. One plant could fill the whole parish garden more or less permanently. But most congregations are primroses – they have a limited, vigorous, individual life, and they grow and spread to fill the ground by division into large numbers of individual plants.⁸⁰²

Adrian Hastings concluded his volume *The History of English Christianity* suggesting that the church in the 1990's was facing a crisis akin to Augustine facing vandals at the gates, and he observed amongst the churches three broad responses. The first, was to succumb to despair, no longer valuing the meaningfulness of the Kingdom of God for the modern world. The second was to withdraw 'into a private sacral sphere, a closed community, monastic or charismatic' and abandon the struggle for transformation of the secular spheres. The third, a preferred and rare option, was to take a sombre and very long view, retaining hope, but without conviction that change would come imminently. Hastings ends with a bleak vision of an increasingly desacralized society, and a religious community unable to reimagine its future after expulsion from wider British public life: 'only when religion has in some way adjusted itself to that expulsion can it effectively resume its missionary task.'⁸⁰³

⁸⁰¹ Warner, *New Wine in New Wineskins*, p. 295.

⁸⁰² B. Jackson, *Hope for the Church: Contemporary strategies for growth* (London, 2002), p. 132. See also H. Steele, *New World, New Church: The Theology of the Emerging Church Movement* (London, 2017), p. 227-229.

⁸⁰³ A. Hastings, *History*, p. 660, 670.

Three decades have passed since these predictions, and the Church of England still occupies a firm place within public processes, with a succession of Prime Ministers declaring their personal faith or indebtedness to Christian thinking, and the emergence of an Archbishop of Canterbury quite unlike his predecessors. Immigration since the 1990's has brought practising Christian populations into cities who have transformed the fabric of churchgoing, especially in London, and the strength of the church in the Global South has radically altered the nature of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Forms of Cathedral worship have become more popular, megachurches have emerged as a feature of British Christianity, as have a variety of apostolic networks amongst new churches. Amongst Anglican Evangelicals the effects of Alpha, Spring Harvest, New Wine, CoMission, Holy Trinity Brompton and other networks concerned with adaptations in worship styles and church planting have also had an impact which may have locally bucked a national downward trend.⁸⁰⁴ These evident positive new developments, especially in cities, have not managed to cancel out the devastating losses in attendance nationally.⁸⁰⁵

Contemporary Continuities from Historic Anglican Evangelicalism

It is clear that for contemporary churches, particularly within the Church of England, there is some wisdom to be gained in tackling the challenges of the future through considering the past. Thoughtful consideration of late and mid nineteenth century new parochialism will bring many rewards and a few warnings. It is common place for Evangelicals to draw on the past, especially for positive inspiration, but less usual to look either to their Anglican Evangelical forebears for replicable patterns of ministry, or avoidable errors. The focus of the thesis has been to address this question of constructing a positive future through an informed study of the past through the practical and theoretical work of Thomas Gaster amongst his contemporaries. Their actions were a practical answer to an inherent and missiologically framed question:

⁸⁰⁴ A. Atherstone and J. Maiden, 'Anglican Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: Identities and Contexts' in A. Atherstone and J. Maiden (eds.), *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century: Reform, Resistance and Renewal* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 1-47. An excellent overview of late twentieth century Evangelical autobiographies and biographies can be found on p. 28f; W. K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain*, pp. 343-353.

⁸⁰⁵ B. Jackson, *Hope for the Church: Contemporary Strategies for Growth* (London, 2002), clearly lays out the case of decline for the Church of England. 'This book should not be read by Anglicans of a nervous disposition, because it gives the statistical evidence for an unpalatable truth: the Church of England is in decline, and has been for nearly a century.' p. 1; see also pp. 1-16 for the data for decline and pp. 135-145 on the impact of church planting.

‘how can an individual, mission agency or congregation best live out a missionary call?’. The entrepreneurial nineteenth-century protagonists of the new parochialism, while of much interest historians of the nineteenth century church and society, also demonstrated competencies which would merit study by contemporary church leaders. If J. I. Packer was correct in his assessment that the Evangelical Anglican identity problem lay in its inability to ‘adapt to change’ in the middle of the twentieth century, then the creative pragmatism of the Victorian age may well furnish the modern era with some answers.⁸⁰⁶ Graham Tomlin, now Bishop of Kensington, commented:

‘If we can rediscover a church shaped by Scripture, quick to respond to cultural change, humbly willing to learn from others, properly accountable, committed to the public life of society and with a strong sense of mutual life and community, then perhaps God may be able to use us as he has done in the past.’⁸⁰⁷

The contextual soil in which new parochialism flourished was a rich loam incorporating elements of imperialism, urbanisation and economics. The new parochial churches were nurtured through proactive leadership, a commitment to mission, a definitive ecclesiology, confident theology, highly involved congregations, and voluntarism. The resonance of these themes, given the challenges faced by contemporary churches, transcend in some way, the disconnections created with the passage of time. Scholars focussed on historic forms and instances of the interplay of evangelism and mission are rightly cautious of historicism, but there are dangers also in assessing evangelicalism solely its new cultural milieus, without a certain confidence in the instructive past, or a well-read understanding of its changing nature through time and culture.⁸⁰⁸ As Clifford Geertz warns, the modern ethnographer and cultural commentator being so haunted by a fear of historicism may become ‘lost in a

⁸⁰⁶ J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem: an analysis*. Latimer Studies, 1 (Oxford, 1978), p. 24.

⁸⁰⁷ G. Tomlin, *Anglican Values*, p. 41; also P. Potter, *The Challenge of Cell Church: Getting to Grips with Cell Church Values* (Oxford, 2001); N. Spencer, *Parochial Vision*, pp. 32-39.

⁸⁰⁸ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, ‘Because evangelicalism has changed so much over time, any attempt to equate it to fundamentalism is doomed to failure.’ p. 275.

whirl of cultural relativism so convulsive as to deprive them of any fixed bearings at all.’⁸⁰⁹

As to continuities, the spiritual and social achievements, as well as the legacy in church buildings and the built environment are especially evident in the key English cities today.⁸¹⁰ It is doubtful that most contemporary evangelicals are deeply conversant with their nineteenth-century predecessors, nevertheless Walker evidences both the visionary prerogative for retrieval and the unwitting dependence on some kind of tradition within Evangelicalism.⁸¹¹ He cites Rowan Williams’s critique of Evangelicalism, that its individualism is more based on Enlightenment thought than on Scripture, and that it suffers from ‘theological amnesia.’⁸¹² Both can be cured by a healthy dose of historical retrievalism.⁸¹³ Williams suggests a retrieval of patristic and canonical tradition,⁸¹⁴ and Walker clearly points out the biblical basis for such a sympathetic view of paradosis.⁸¹⁵ However, even if popular Evangelicalism might be accused of theological amnesia, where a keen interest in history is displayed, the tendency of Evangelical authors is to look to within their own roots for legitimacy and renewal.⁸¹⁶ There has been a conscious self-selection of historical motifs and patterns for retrieval, and renewal for some time, even if this engagement might sometimes admittedly be thin or positivist.

What they would discover if they did look to their own roots for refreshment, is that the Missionary Evangelicals of the nineteenth century were themselves passionate recorders and historians, who adopted motifs and tradition with alacrity. J. C. Ryle counselled Victorian evangelicals to know their history, and to learn from the heroes of the faith. He goes further than this, by suggesting that they should be an inspiration for the present, and in so doing embodies an essentially positivist view of

⁸⁰⁹ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 45.

⁸¹⁰ F. Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2008), p. xxii.

⁸¹¹ As attested by C. Calver, ‘Afterword’, p. 198 in J. Wolffe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780-1980* (London, 1995).

⁸¹² A. Walker, ‘Deep Church as Paradosis: On Relating Scripture and Tradition’ in A. Walker and L. Bretherton (eds.), *Remembering our Future* (London, 2007), p. 63.

⁸¹³ Williams, ‘Retrieving the tradition’ in D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 9-11.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸¹⁵ Walker, ‘Deep Church as Paradosis’, p. 66.

⁸¹⁶ Packer suggested two streams have ‘flowed together to create the evangelical identity, without perfectly merging’; one is the ‘confessional, churchly, anti-Roman Catholic Protestantism of the sixteenth century...the other is the pietism, intellectually unenterprising, but with a passion for vital spiritual experience.’ J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem*, p. 6.

history. In a preface to a volume outlining the biographies of Evangelical leaders of the Eighteenth Century he writes: 'The reader will soon discover that I am an enthusiastic admirer of the men whose pictures I have sketched in this volume'⁸¹⁷ Thomas Gaster, in the style of the immersive chronicler recorded history and details in his missionary journals and in the *Brief History of All Saints Camberwell*. Oxford's Alfred Christopher's first work was to prepare the *Memoir of John James Weitbrecht* for publication.⁸¹⁸ J.L. Packer, argued fiercely in *Among God's Giants* for the rehabilitation of the oft-maligned English Puritans, and suggested that in their lives and writings could be found authentically British spiritual giants, whose stability and maturity could heal the 'inch-thinness' of much contemporary Evangelical Christianity.⁸¹⁹ The engagement with the past did something to anchor identity and conviction amongst the plethora of competing modern alternatives. Packer also quickly locates Evangelicalism by way of referral to historical forebears:

When I learned of the evangelical tradition in history, as seen in men like Augustine; the Reformers; the Puritans; Edwards, Whitfield and Wesley; Ryle, Spurgeon, Finney, Moody and Hudson Taylor in the last century, and more recently B.B. Warfield and C.T. Studd, I believed myself to identify with all the main things they had stood for...⁸²⁰

This is a filtered, selective history, but is a present located through history nonetheless. For Stott, the antidote to unstable contemporary evangelicals is to be found in an awareness of history and continuity:

Now this historical dimension is important today in a world that is busily cutting adrift from its historical roots. For the living God of the Bible is the God of history... One of the weaknesses of the house church movement is that it has little sense of history, little sense of continuity with the past.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁷ J. C. Ryle, Preface of 1868 (Edinburgh, 1997), p. iv.

⁸¹⁸ M. Weitbrecht, *Memoir of John James Weitbrecht* (London, 1873).

⁸¹⁹ J. I. Packer, *Among God's Giants*, p. 433-434.

⁸²⁰ J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem*, p. 1.

⁸²¹ J. Stott, *The Living Church* (Nottingham, 2007), p. 168f; J. Stott, *Make the Truth known*,

Within the new parochialism, in the ministry of Gaster, and his contemporaries such as John Barton, Richard Hobson and Alfred Christopher, activism was accompanied with entrepreneurial missionary methodology and drive. This hallmark of Evangelicalism which though recognised by historians and theologians is seldom articulated by church leaders.⁸²² The all-encompassing nature of pioneering mission in India had translated well to the needs of the needs of a start-up congregations in London, Oxford and Cambridge. As curate in Camberwell, Gaster thought nothing of installing underfloor heating into the church in his ministry role. Whatever would further the ministry became his self-generated responsibility. The flexibility of roles within ministry and mission teams relied on high levels of self-direction, pragmatism and delegated authority, with the emphasis on results over processes. As was demonstrated in the building of All Saints schools and buildings, Gaster instinctively and successfully negotiated and decided almost all the details of the build, moving the ministry forward at a lightning speed not seen in comparable committee-generated building projects in the local area and elsewhere in England.

New parochialism was also decidedly Protestant and revivalist in nature, both of which present challenges for uncritical appreciation in the contemporary era. In a situation where church attendance in churches of all denominations is drastically lower than in the nineteenth century, it is hard to relate to energy spent on partisan approaches to Puseyites and the internecine wars within the Church of England during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Noll is not alone amongst contemporary historians and evangelicals in no longer being comfortable in identifying with the most robust of Protestantism's critique of popery: 'if this historic shift from all-out Catholic-evangelical antagonism to modest Catholic-evangelical engagement marks a

(Leicester, 1983), p. 3. And see also C. Buchanan, *Is the Church of England Biblical*, pp. 6-10, for an assessment on Evangelical claims to the historic middle ground in the Church of England.

'Despite all constitutional verbiage... some assertion of the supremacy of Scripture as a matter of principle was to be found under it all, and that principle was to expand to coming reigns, become vital to the rationale and life of Anglicanism.' p. 29.

⁸²² M. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Leicester, 2004), pp. 48-50; D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 35-74, suggests that it was the encounter with Enlightenment culture which generated discontinuity; J. Coffey, 'Puritanism, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Protestant Tradition', pp. 252-277 in M. A. G. Haykin and K. J. Stewart, *The Emergence of Evangelicalism* (Nottingham, 2008); A. Munden, *A Light in a Dark Place: Jesmond Parish Church, Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 2006), is one of these studies that brings the church into the present. p. 217.

genuine moment in the long history of the Church, the way to exploit that grace will certainly not be simply to ignore the past, but will be to find a middle way of hope.’⁸²³

Martyn Percy, suggests that one key to understanding contemporary Evangelicalism, especially in its Charismatic form exemplified by Bishop David Pytches,⁸²⁴ is to grapple with its history, drawing attention its revivalist self-identification: ‘One of the keys to understanding the past, present and future of Charismatic Christianity is to perceive its ‘revivalist’ identity.’ He suggests that the perpetual recurrence of revivals in history is of great importance in reading the history, understanding the present and charting potential future courses for Evangelicalism: ‘Each of these revivals, although different phenomenologically, shares a common ‘genetic code’’⁸²⁵ And this is borne out in Ian Paisley who traces five great revivals from Bohemia in 1315 to Ulster in 1859, writing stridently: ‘what is the history of revivals. It is none other than the chronicling of the story of the spreading of true Biblical religion and its victorious march of the Church of Christ through the centuries.’⁸²⁶ In the story of All Saints Peckham this revivalist genetic code was evident both in birth and in the rebirth stories of the congregation.

However, the revival theme is also present in the depressive seasons when the prayed-for revivals failed to emerge, and this too is evidenced in wider post-revival evangelicalism in our own era, as Stackhouse suggests: ‘the delay of revival success has encouraged a general weariness. To be sure, there have been claims of revival, but nothing matching the numerical expectations of the early pioneers of renewal has yet taken place, with the resulting pathology that arises from a ‘hope deferred’’.⁸²⁷ Warner suggests when evangelical revivalism fused with entrepreneurialism in the 1990’s, in the face of growing secularization, ‘the entrepreneurialists developed a narrative of imminent success, evidently beguiling for participants, at least in the short-term, even if... ultimately quixotic, even fictive.’⁸²⁸

⁸²³ M. Noll, ‘The History of an Encounter: Roman Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals’ in C. Colson and R. J. Neuhaus (eds.), *Evangelicals and Catholics Together – towards a Common Mission* (Dallas, Word, 1995), p. 107.

⁸²⁴ D. Pytches, *Living on the Edge* (London, 2004), p. 364-365, 375. Knight agrees with this revival designation. F. Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. xvi, 127-148.

⁸²⁵ M. Percy, ‘A Place at High Table? Assessing the Future of Charismatic Christianity’ in G. Davie, P. Heelas and L. Woodhead, *Predicting Religion* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 99.

⁸²⁶ I. R. K. Paisley, *The 1859 Revival* (Belfast, 2009).

⁸²⁷ I. Stackhouse, *The Gospel-Driven Church* (Carlisle, 2004), p. 6.

⁸²⁸ Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, p. 236.

There remain three options for a contemporary Church of England determined to learn from the nineteenth century evangelical past and from new parochialism in particular.⁸²⁹ First, a positive approach could be called for, using the past as a template, a conversation partner in mission, a practical and methodological data source for church growth in a different era.⁸³⁰

And the second option is defeatist. In the face of startling sociological differences, one could take the opinion that parochialism as a whole is either dead or should be phased out and use the resources to invest in alternative forms of mission and ministry, developing new models of ministry more able to serve the coming generations. This option was firmly rejected in new parochialism, but the devastating assessment on the failures of previous or current forms of parochialism were a necessary corollary to developing new and effective forms of missionary and local ministry.

Thirdly, there is an option to emulate not the specifics but the stance of new parochialism, representing as it does, a fusion of the competencies of the global mission movement with the excellences of localism and parochialism. This approach, would be informed by the past, but would generate fresh theological and practical thinking in order to re-imagine parochialism today.⁸³¹

⁸²⁹ Warner suggests that contemporary evangelical expressions, especially in the 1980s tended to develop along axes within Bebbington's quadrilateral, either as Biblicist-crucicentricists or the more entrepreneurial conversionist-activists, their earlier predecessors seemed inclined to maintain a fuller grasp on all four distinctives. R. Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism, 1966-2001: A Theological and Sociological study* (Eugene, 2007), p. 236, 237, 242, suggests that the 1980s saw a return to forms of evangelical entrepreneurialism which recreated a subcultural identity but which led to novel emphases which were volatile and transitory.

⁸³⁰ D. B. Hindmarsh, *Spirit of Early Evangelicalism*, pp. 54-57, and perhaps recover the fervent connectionalism which marked the spirit of early Evangelicalism as well as the more developed mission methodologies of new parochialism.

⁸³¹ W. K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Blethley, 2007), pp. 266-272, 289-291.

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Appendix: Images.

Fig. 1. Mission Church at Agra. Illustration in *Church Missionary Gleaner* (April 1859), p. 39

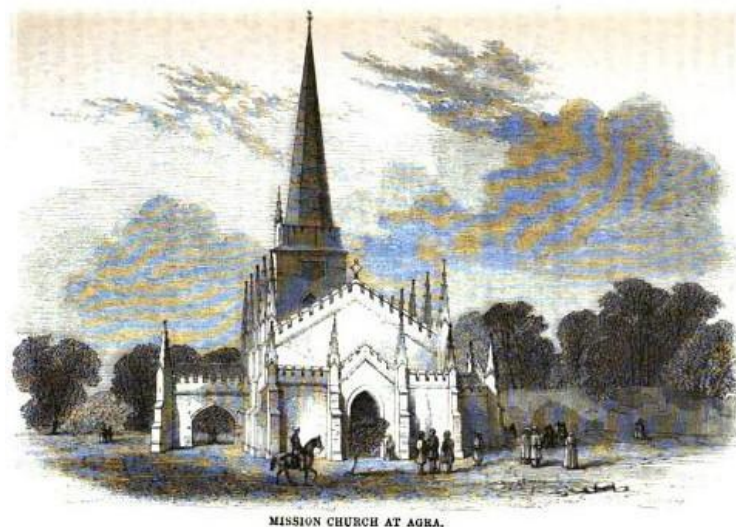


Fig. 2. T. J. Gaster, portrait detail. *All Saints Peckham*.



Fig. 3. Proposed Assignment document for All Saints, Blenheim Grove.



Fig. 4. Correspondence with Mr Pringle, Ecclesiastical Commissioners, 24 July 1872, concerning the new district boundaries. London Metropolitan Archive, P73/GIS/185; P73/GIS/186; DW OP 73/1.

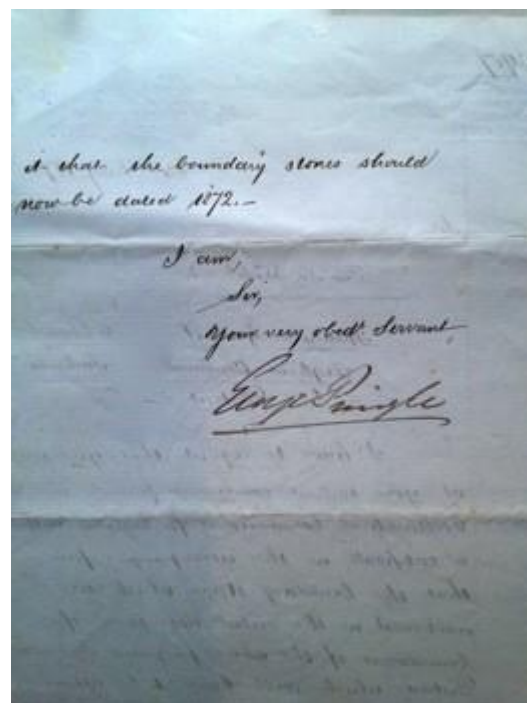
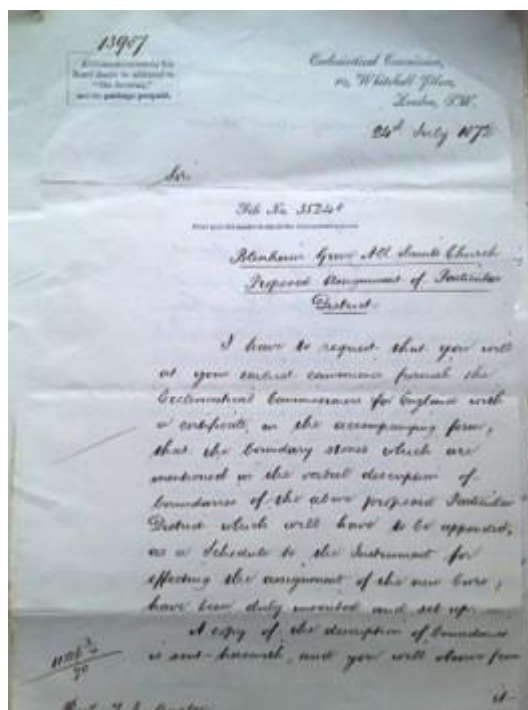


Fig 5. Contract to build the Church, personally signed by T. J. Gaster.



Fig. 6. Coe. Ground plan. St Philips Church, Kennington.

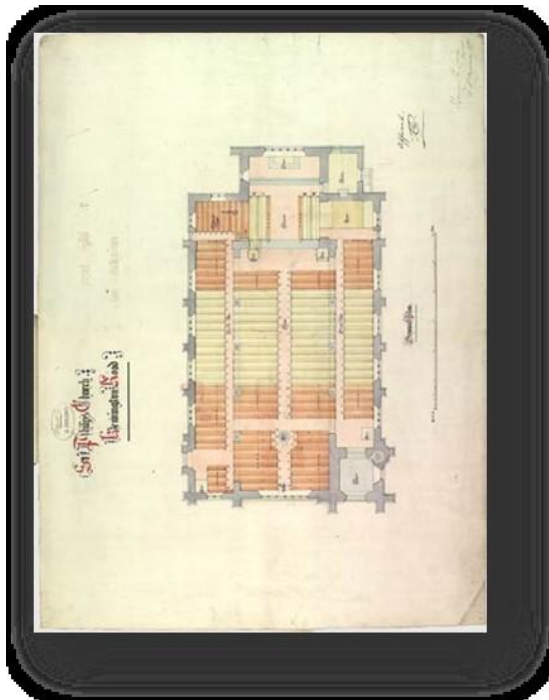


Fig. 7 Coe. Ground Plan. All Saints Church, Blenheim Grove.

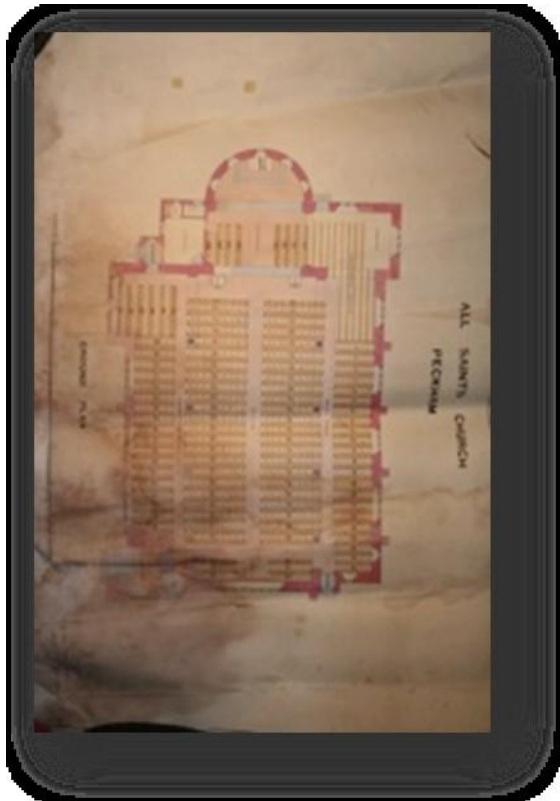


Fig. 8 Coe. St Philips, Camberwell.

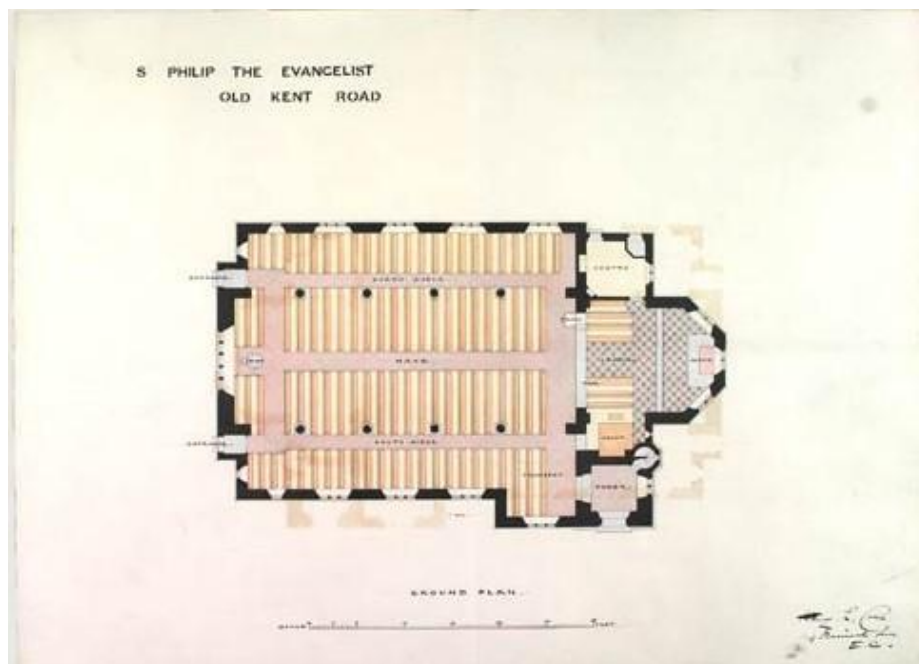
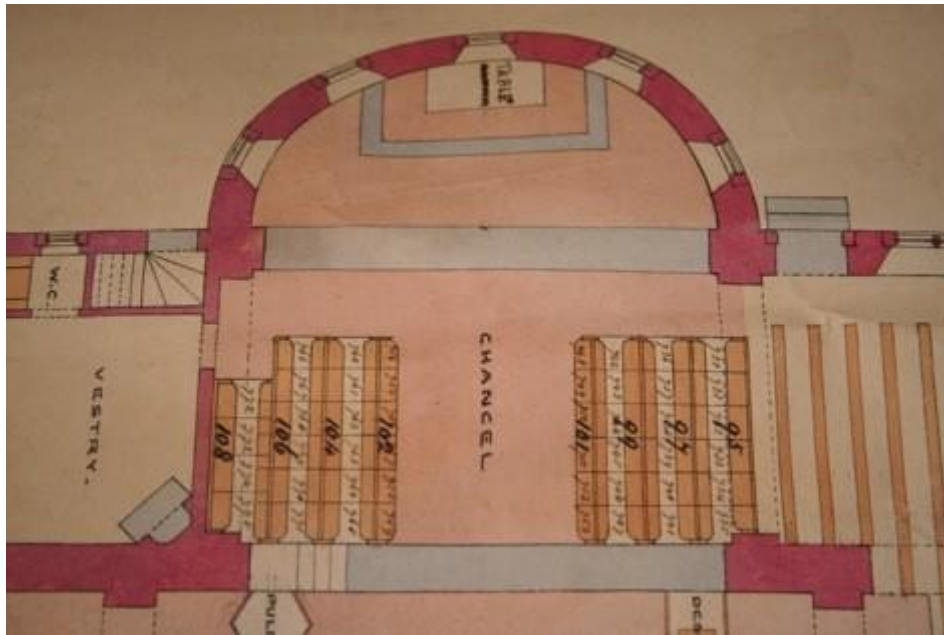


Fig. 9. All Saints Peckham, groundplan (detail).



All Saints Peckham, groundplan (detail showing children's seats and organ)

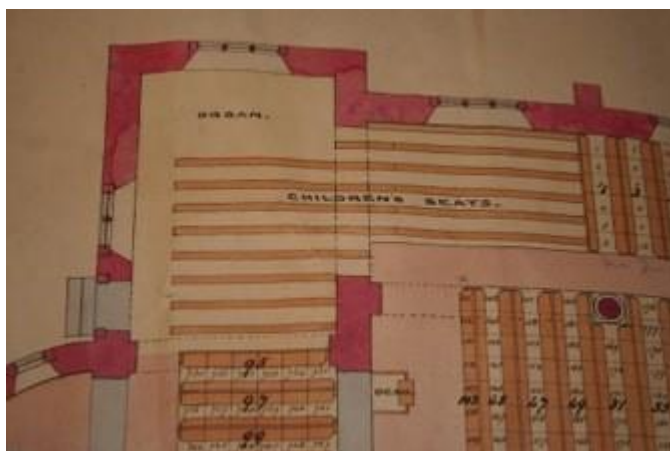


Fig. 10. Pew rent notice, detail showing ideal church.



Fig. 11. November 1872. Original Pew rent notice.

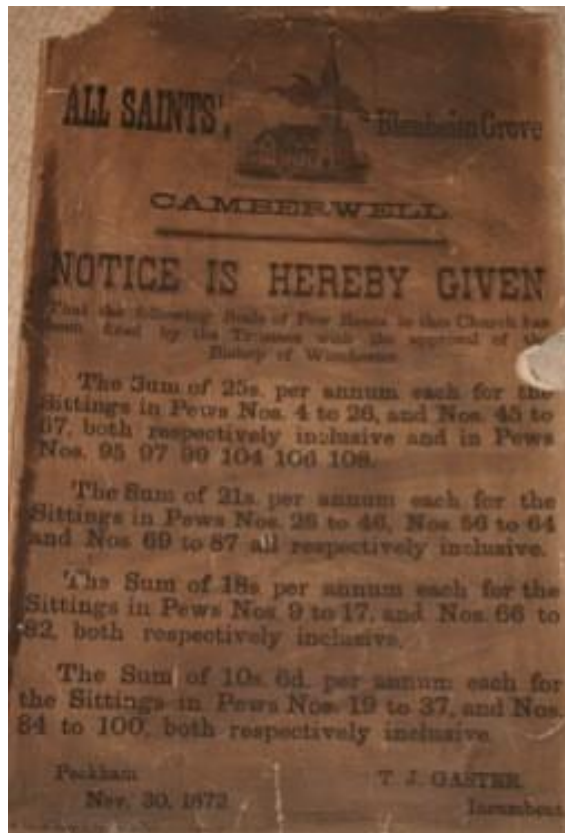


Fig. 12. All Saints c.1910 from Blenheim Grove, looking east.



Fig. 13. St Philips Kennington Rd.



Fig. 14. Church roof undergoing repairs in c.1962.



Fig. 15. Contemporary view from the train platform of Peckham Rye (2012).

http://s0.geograph.org.uk/geophotos/02/29/12/2291203_d8844220.jpg



Fig. 16. T J Gaster. Silvertint Photograph.



Fig. 17. T Gaster, Commemorative plate.



Fig. 18. Spurgeon Commemorative Plate.



Fig. 19. Thomas Gaster. Commemorative plate. Reverse inscription. 'Rev T. J. Gaster, Vicar of All Saints, Peckham Isabel V..... 1885'

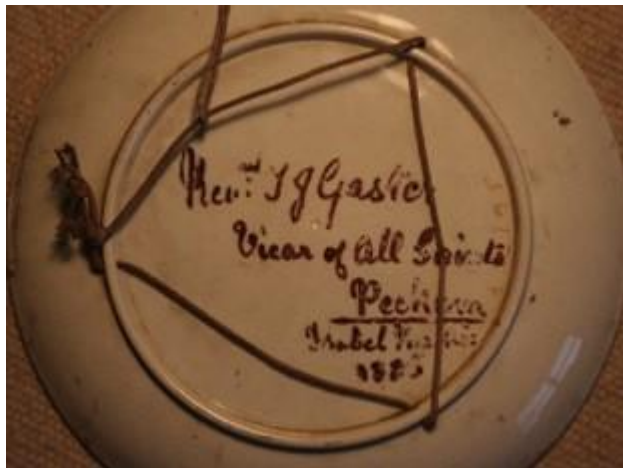


Fig. 20. Abdul Massih. Painting at Ridley Hall, Cambridge.



Fig. 21. *All Saints Herald*, front covers. December 1951, March 1952, May 1954.

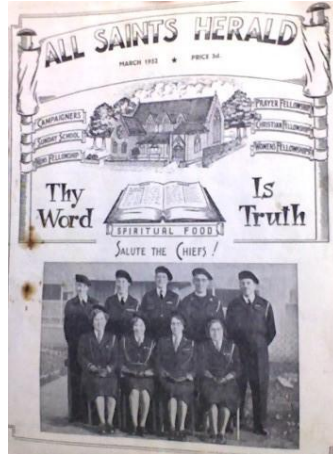


Fig. 22. *All Saints Herald*, March 1969, *All Saints Herald*, November 1970; *This Month at All Saints*, December 1980.

